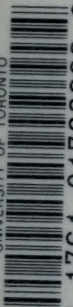


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THE ORIGINS OF FRENCH ROMANTICISM

THE GARDENS OF FRENCH ROMANTICISM

THE ORIGINS OF FRENCH ROMANTICISM

BY

M. B. FINCH

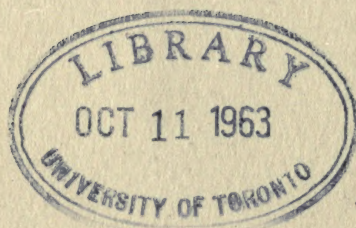
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To
L. J. G.

PREFACE

THE bibliography at the end of the book contains acknowledgments of the works we have consulted, classified according to the chapters for which they were used. It seems fitting, however, to refer gratefully here to the works of three authors to whom we are specially indebted. Our list contains the titles of those articles of Sainte-Beuve which we are conscious of having directly utilised; but further details here and there have no doubt crept in from the great mass of his work, always so rich in information and suggestion. Readers of the *Shakespeare en France sous l'Ancien Régime* of M. Jusserand, and of the *Rousseau et le Cosmopolitisme Français* of M. Texte, will have no difficulty in seeing how much our treatment of English influences owes to these two invaluable works.

We also wish to express our thanks to our friend Miss Gardiner for her constant help and encouragement, as well as for the more tangible assistance she gave by writing the pages on *Obermann* and *Adolphe* for Chapter V. of Book II.; and to Professor A. T. Baker, Mr. E. Bullough, and Mr. L. Chouville, who have kindly read parts of the book in manuscript.

M. B. F.

E. A. P.

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INTRODUCTION

IN literature as well as in the realm of Nature every organism bears within itself the germs of its own decay. The history of books, like that of animals, is a series of cycles, ascending possibly in a gradual spiral, recurring certainly in well-marked sequence. Expansion and contraction, work and quiescence, action and reaction, show themselves no less in the growth of a literary *genre* than in the growth of a plant. By the mere fact of defining a movement we postulate also the existence of its opposite, and suggest further that that opposite will in its own time be followed by a return, not to the original, but to something not greatly unlike it. It has been remarked that the history of English literature—and of course the same thing applies to French—can be represented graphically by a curve consisting of a number of waves of equal height—first the crest, then its complement the trough. But of late the crests and the depressions have been closer together: action and reaction follow one another more rapidly than was the case a thousand or even five hundred years ago.

Thus it is that in studying the origins of Romanticism we shall do well to begin by considering the characteristics of the age which preceded it, for every one of these, carried to its logical conclusion, must of necessity result in the corresponding trait of the succeeding movement. The eighteenth century, then, was a continuation and so an exaggeration of the seventeenth; we find in it a slavish

imitation of the letter of classicism, a total lack of comprehension of its spirit. The "noble" *genres* remain; still more rigid are the rules by which they are bound, still slighter the chance that genuine inspiration can flourish within such narrow and arbitrary bounds. Convention reigns supreme: the tyranny of society—and of a society which becomes daily more responsive to the slightest whims of fashion—is allied with the tyranny of Aristotle, Chapelain, Boileau. And it is not only in the realm of art that this yoke is felt: it is extended over the realm of ideas also. It is not difficult to understand that in the most social of all ages lyric poetry might be transformed into occasional verse; but one is certainly surprised to find the telescope of Newton adorned with ribbons and pom-poms for the delectation of Fontenelle's irritating "Marquise" and Voltaire's "divine Emilie." In the *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes*, in the *Lettres Persanes*—even in *L'Esprit des Lois*, for that matter—in all the work of Voltaire, we see this attempt to adapt astronomy, physics, philosophy, metaphysics, to the understanding of the readers of Hamilton and Crébillon *filis*. Learning suffers considerably in the process, and it is doubtful whether those for whom it was thus simplified and stultified were very much enlightened after all.

Still, the attempt is characteristic of the age. We have just used the word "enlightened." It forms part of the verb which the *philosophes* tried to conjugate in all its moods and tenses: "les lumières" are their highest aspiration, ignorance is their greatest foe. The eighteenth century is *par excellence* the century of reason; the old quarrel between ancient art and modern science has resulted in an overwhelming victory for the latter. And "science" means mathematical science; "proof," mathematical proof only. There is no place for the half-tones, the

doubts, the imaginative hypotheses, which have so large a part in the methods of to-day. The eighteenth century before Rousseau has a purely mechanical conception of the universe. It is the age of a narrow rationalism: Lockian empiricism holds sway, and common sense appears such an excellent guide as far as it goes that it never occurs to anyone that it does not go very far. Religion, then, goes entirely by the board. In the seventeenth century it had continued a more or less healthy existence "de par le roi"; faith was present, if only by order. But Fontenelle's *Discours sur les Oracles* marks a new tendency. Orthodoxy has crumbled away in the general *débâcle* of the system of Louis XIV.; religion must come out into the open and stand its trial before the bar of common sense—and naturally enough it fails to get a verdict.

Without faith and without imagination, the eighteenth century is thus what a purely rationalistic age must always be, the prey of materialism. The work of the *philosophes* was to shutter the windows that looked out on the infinite. This done, they certainly tried to put the inside of their house in order: they showed a great and praiseworthy zeal for social reform, industrial development, the theory and practice of statecraft, the safeguarding of the liberty of the individual; but all these interests, admirable in themselves, could not make up for that wider liberty which they had shut out. The intellectual atmosphere in which they lived was stagnant and vitiated: the "lumières" of Locke and Leibnitz, Fontenelle and Bayle, made a poor substitute for the free sunlight of inspiration.

Thus it is that in summing up the characteristics of that century which we are always prone to regard as the age of Voltaire rather than the age of Rousseau, we readily label it with such catch phrases as "exaggerated sociability," "spiritual atrophy," "narrow rationalism," "mere

humanitarianism," "reform on a purely materialistic basis," "lack of imagination," "incapacity for feeling." But if we accept these definitions of the eighteenth century, we shall find considerable difficulty in explaining the *sensibilité*, the love of Nature and of melancholy, the idealism, the vague reawakenings of religion, which appear everywhere in the period from 1760 to 1789, and are by no means entirely absent before it.

It must be recognised that in France as much as in England the surface current may be sweeping in the direction of pure reason, while in the depths there is another stream, insignificant in comparison, but still far from negligible, which creeps slowly and painfully in the opposite direction. Side by side with the almost abstract deism of Voltaire we find the personal religion of Rousseau; the intellectual Mme. du Deffand is the contemporary of the emotional Julie de Lespinasse; life and passion desert the theatre, but they take refuge in the novel; the melancholy of Ossian and Young charms the authors of the wittiest burlesques and epigrams of any period; the Alps become a formidable rival to the gardens of Versailles and the woods of Fontainebleau.

In studying the origins of Romanticism, there is thus no need to turn to the sixteenth century, with Sainte-Beuve, to the poetry of the Moors and the Troubadours with Raynouard and Sismondi, to that of England and Germany, with Villemain and Mme. de Staël. All these influences must be taken into account, and some of them will prove so important as to require detailed consideration; but in general we may say that the source of the new movement is to be sought in what is at once the most obvious and the most apparently unpromising ground—the eighteenth century in France. Voltaire we must

indeed leave on one side as being hopelessly rationalistic, but in Diderot we can seize the link between philosophy and romance, between Voltaire and Rousseau; and once we arrive at the latter there will be no difficulty in following the well-beaten track which he was the first to explore.

THE ORIGINS OF FRENCH ROMANTICISM

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

DIDEROT

By the Romantics Voltaire was regarded as a type of the eighteenth-century static, while Sainte-Beuve taught them to see in Rousseau the representative of the eighteenth-century dynamic; but to his contemporaries Diderot was *le philosophe par excellence*, the mirror of his age, the man who, just because he expressed so exactly, although in heightened form, what everyone around him was thinking, was idolised in his day and almost completely forgotten fifty years later. Apart from the *Encyclopédie*, he produced comparatively little work of lasting value: he wasted himself on journalism, on the writing of topical pamphlets and disreputable *contes*; he spent much of his time in merely scattering to the winds of controversy the gold of his ideas; yet Voltaire, Grimm, Helvétius, even Rousseau, so jealous of other men's glory, looked up to him as the successor of the philosophers of old, as the 'coming man,' who, alas! was destined never to arrive.

Voltaire spoke of him as a second Plato, endowed with "l'esprit le plus synthétique qui ait surgi depuis Aristote,"

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Rousseau made the same comparison when he admired "cette tête universelle qu'on regardera de loin comme nous considérons aujourd'hui la tête des Platon et des Aristote." As to the little men, they realised early enough that Diderot was an excellent writer to steal from, or to beg from, for never was there a more prodigal soul than this 'universal provider to the *philosophes*'; so they paid him the highest compliment in their power by stealing and begging to their hearts' content. From his conversation the Abbé Raynal gleaned the daring outbursts of free-thought which formed the only purple patches of his dreary *Histoire des Deux Indes*, Helvétius and d'Holbach the brilliant suggestions, the fleeting, only half-serious ideas, which they expanded in deadly earnest into dull and logical systems. Grimm was ever ready to leave the task of filling up his news-letters to one so eager to write and so inexhaustible in writing, whether on the point or round it. Rousseau himself, if the opposing faction is to be believed, owed to Diderot the paradox on the arts and sciences which formed the basis of his *Lettre à l'Académie de Dijon*, and indeed of his whole system. Rousseau, of course, declared that his great idea was the result of half an hour of blinding inspiration, but as even he admitted that the inspiration descended while he was on the road to Vincennes, where Diderot was imprisoned at the time, the latter seems to have been at any rate partly responsible.

The quality which most struck Diderot's contemporaries was his universality, the trait of which Voltaire was thinking when he coined for him the nickname Pantophile. Had he lived half a century later, Michelet might have described him, and not Dumas père, as "une force de la nature"; half a century earlier gossips would have hinted that he, and not Fontenelle, had sat for at least part of the portrait of Cydias, *le bel esprit*.

“ Il a une enseigne, un atelier, des ouvrages de commande, et des compagnons qui travaillent sous lui. . . . Prose, vers, que voulez-vous ? il réussit également en l'un et en l'autre. . . . Entrez dans son magasin, il y a à choisir.”

With this quality went boundless enterprise. His great influence was certainly due in some measure to the fact that he said the right thing at the right time, yet, on the other hand, he was a genuine pioneer. He was not, like Voltaire, obliged to follow the Encyclopædists, because he was their leader, yet he was not, like Rousseau, so far ahead of them as to seem a mere visionary. That with all his energy he did not accomplish greater things is explained by the fact that with initiative went restlessness: “ la tête d'un Langrois est sur ses épaules comme un coq au haut d'un clocher,” said he. Natural science, technology, England, Nature, Shakespeare, sentiment, the Gothic—he discovered them all, but he turned aside and left to others the task of exploring them.

His love of England was of threefold growth: it arose from his love of science, his love of liberty, and, one must add, his journalist's love of novelty. He knew the language thoroughly, was one of the most industrious of the many translators of his day, and, as the fashion was, professed unbounded veneration for the philosophers Shaftesbury, Locke, Bacon, whom he translated or adapted. Bacon he considered “ un génie extraordinaire.” He approved of his inductive method, for Diderot was one of the earliest opponents of the orthodox system of Descartes; he regarded himself as the successor of the great Pansophist, with the *Encyclopédie* as his *Instauratio Magna*. As he said, in words which Bacon would not have disavowed: “ Le but d'une Encyclopédie est de rassembler les connaissances éparses sur la surface de la

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terre, d'en exposer le système aux hommes avec qui nous vivons, et de le transmettre aux hommes qui viendront après nous; afin que . . . nos neveux, devenant plus instruits, deviennent en même temps plus vertueux et plus heureux, et que nous ne mourions pas sans avoir bien mérité du genre humain."

Diderot's love of liberty governed his whole life, not always for the best, since often the dividing-line between liberty and licence became blurred for him. He was, perhaps, the most thorough-going individualist of his age—for Rousseau was an egoist rather than an individualist—and the free expression of his personality was to him an absolute condition of existence. At the same time he was the greatest sufferer from the capricious tyranny of the Government: Voltaire was too clever to be caught, Rousseau's complaints won him sentimental but powerful protectors; but Diderot compromised himself too far and adopted too independent an attitude to be forgiven. It was not wonderful, then, that he should admire in other countries the appearance of that personal freedom which was so conspicuously absent from his own; that he should praise the party system and the Habeas Corpus Act, or see in Catherine II. of Russia "l'âme de Brutus et la figure de Cléopâtre."

English literature thus appealed to him partly because nothing but good could come out of the land of liberty, partly because he found in it "plus de hardiesse dans l'esprit qu'on n'en a communément dans les siècles pusillanimes du goût." His attempted reforms in the theatre were largely due to British influence. Shakespeare was to him little more than a great name, to be admired simply because he was English and was not orthodox. "Cet Anglais n'est à comparer ni à l'Apollon du Belvédère, ni à l'Antinoüs, ni au Gladiateur, mais bien au Saint Chris-

tophe de Notre-Dame, colosse informe, grossièrement sculpté"; but, lest we should on the strength of this verdict regard Diderot as the herald of Hugo, we come a little later on to the opinion that "avec un peu de talent" one could make a good thing out of almost any of the barbarian's scenes. It was to Voltaire the aristocrat that Shakespeare made his greatest appeal, and a slight one at that; Diderot, eminently *bourgeois*, was more attracted by the middle-class drama of contemporary England, as represented by the *Gamester* of Moore, by the *Christian Hero* of Steele, and above all by the *London Merchant* of Lillo.

On these models Diderot tried to fashion his *tragédie bourgeoise*, a new type equally removed from tragedy and from comedy, and only slightly resembling the "genteel and sentimental" *comédie larmoyante* of La Chaussée. Of his two dramas, *Le Fils Naturel* was coldly received. *Le Père de Famille* may be called a success, since the whole audience, including the author, dissolved into tears as one man, and Duclôs, says Diderot, ambiguously remarked at the end of the performance, "que trois pièces comme celle-là tueraient la tragédie." But Diderot was temperamentally incapable of writing good plays; his discursive habit of mind was fatal to his constructive powers; his strong personality invaded that of his characters, and turned them into puppets who could only sigh and gush and recite their creator's ideas on virtue and sentiment—a proceeding which Voltaire and his circle found "bien comique."

Diderot's theory was better than his practice. It can be summed up in the one word Realism; he demands that subjects shall be taken from everyday life, that characters shall be defined by their *milieu*—a prevision of Taine—that more attention shall be paid to *mise en scène*, grouping, dress, intonation, gesture. The extremely tragic and

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the extremely comic are to be avoided in favour of the pathetic; elaborately contrived situations are not permitted—the *drame à crise* is replaced by the *drame à thèse*. The innovations of Diderot thus mark a stage in the transition from the internal to the external, from psychological to physical realism, which began with La Bruyère, which developed in the novel of Lesage, of Marivaux, of Rousseau, which culminated in the local colour of the Romantics, and which ended, let us hope, in the “photography” and the *reportage* of the Goncourts.

So far Diderot has been working on practically the same lines as Voltaire—each is a prophet of the Enlightenment and of Liberty. By his views on Nature, however, Diderot breaks away from the deliberate artificiality represented by Voltaire, and in so doing forms the link between Voltaire and Rousseau. To his contemporaries the latter more especially was “the man of nature,” yet in some respects Diderot was more extreme than he. Rousseau thought of Nature chiefly as the opposite of a corrupt civilisation, as that distant state of goodness and happiness which continued until the first man who marked out a piece of land as his own laid the foundations of a society of slaves and tyrants, poor and rich. He thought, too, of external nature as something beautiful or desolate in itself, apart from the trifling human drama to which it formed the background, and as something able to exert an ennobling and a calming influence on those ready to submit to its spell. Diderot certainly meditated on the contrast between society and the natural state, since it was he who first pointed it out to Rousseau. Yet, in his article on Society in the *Encyclopédie*, he adopts—*pour cause*!—a surprisingly orthodox point of view: “Tout nous invite à l’état de société; le besoin nous en fait une

nécessité, le penchant nous en fait un plaisir." Voltaire himself would not have said differently. He refers to the "contract, formal or tacit, made between all men," but it is without enthusiasm. He describes the gentle savage with as much emotion as he can muster, but, in a fragment not subject to the self-imposed censorship of the *Encyclopédie*, he treats the pure-souled child of Nature flippantly enough:

"Tous les vices moraux qui conduisent l'homme policé au vol doivent conduire le sauvage au même résultat, le vol; or, le seul vol qu'un sauvage soit tenté de faire, c'est la vie d'un homme qu'il trouve bon à manger."

Many passages scattered throughout his works make it clear that he loved Nature in the Romantic sense. Thus he addresses his readers:

"Vous avez vu cent fois le coucher du soleil et le lever des étoiles; vous avez entendu la campagne retentir du chant éclatant des oiseaux; mais qui de vous a senti que c'était le bruit du jour qui rependait le silence de la nuit plus charmant?"

And he returns again and again to the same theme, which seems to have had a peculiar attraction for him. His work, written in the city, is emphatically of the city, yet now and again a fresh wind sweeps aside the dust and the fog, and reveals for a brief moment the blue sky beyond.

But most of all Nature meant for Diderot just what it did for Rabelais: the entire absence of restraint, social or moral, on the complete fulfilment of one's natural functions. Diderot would certainly have subscribed to the rule of the Abbey of Thelema—he was, indeed, the eighteenth-century counterpart of that muscular "Christian," Frère Jean des Entommeurs; but, like Rabelais, he protested against every other kind of rule, and rejected what he regarded as the fetters of formal religion. Even that

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passage on the strength of which he has been claimed as a social reformer, the diatribe of Rameau, is in reality nothing more than an outburst of fierce individualism. It is a hungry, down-at-heel, greedy adventurer of the Renaissance, not an altruistic member of the Constituent Assembly, who exclaims:

“Comment, Rameau, il y a dix mille bonnes tables à Paris, à quinze ou vingt couverts chacune, et de ces couverts-là il n’y en a pas un pour toi ! Il y a des bourses pleines d’or qui se versent de droite et de gauche, et il n’en tombe pas une pièce pour toi ! Mille petits beaux esprits sans talents, sans mérite, mille petites créatures sans charmes, mille plats intrigants sont bien vêtus, et tu irais tout nu ? et tu serais imbécile à ce point ?”

The moral system of Rameau, like that of Figaro, reduces itself to a mere “Ote-toi de là, que je m’y mette !” It is worthy of note that while the Jesuits, for purely political reasons, were the object of the most violent attacks of the *philosophes* as a body, Diderot’s feud was less with them than with the monastic orders, those foes of Nature, according to him, whose retreats he represented in *La Religieuse* as the abodes of idleness, ignorance, avarice, cruelty, and vice. In this way he stands in the direct line of succession from Jean de Meung and Rutebeuf and all the satirical *conteurs* of the Middle Ages, a fact which alone shows the distance which separates him from Rousseau. Diderot was a Frenchman, his work seasoned with more than a pinch of Gallic salt; Rousseau a Swiss of the Geneva of Calvin, a true son of the city which had expelled Marot and was even now proving an unquiet neighbour to Voltaire. With Rousseau the moral aspect of a question was ever, in theory at least, the most important; for Diderot it did not exist, except in so far as it was capable of sentimental amplifications.

For sentiment was Diderot's guiding star. His individualism often prevented him from acting quite justly towards those with whom he came into personal contact, though even here his intentions were irreproachable; but what he lacked in his dealings with his neighbours he made up in his unlimited goodwill towards humanity at large. With mild and watery eye he surveyed mankind from China to Peru; he melted into ecstasies over the untutored Indian; man's inhumanity to man made him weep copiously—but then man's benevolence had precisely the same unfortunate effect. "Ah, ma Sophie," wrote he to Mlle. Volland, "qu'il est doux d'ouvrir ses bras quand c'est pour y recevoir et pour y serrer un homme de bien!"—and he certainly ought to have known, in view of the story which tells how he sobbed on Grimm's neck after they had been separated for a fortnight. All this was well enough in its way; Diderot's tearful resolve to love his fellow-men was a refreshing contrast to Voltaire's unpleasant habit of sneering at them, but he exaggerated so far as to become merely ridiculous and ineffective. He was, indeed, one of the gentlemen who protest too much, and whose protestations are absolutely without weight.

Yet one must do him the justice of admitting that he meant, or thought he meant, every word he said. He had a very genuine hatred of oppression; he desired the abolition of slavery, and protested against the domestic tyranny exercised by the average paterfamilias of his day. He hated anything mean and base; he was filled with enthusiasm, often hysterical, by a noble action, a generous word; and his admiration for what his contemporaries regarded as *bourgeois* virtues and *bourgeois* ideals—those of family life—was strongest of all. So far an excellent character, if not a very interesting one; the interest is added when

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one considers the obverse of the medal, and finds that, as was said of Fox, the brow of the philosopher surmounts the jowl of the satyr. For Diderot was very much a man of his age, gross and sensual in many ways, as he was all too ready to admit: "Je ne suis pas un capucin," wrote he, with a complacent chuckle. He was a man of his class, not always careful to conceal his feelings under the veneer of conventional politeness which successfully covered more corrupt characters than his. Self-restraint, as we have said, hardly existed for him; he was actuated by what has been well called "un besoin perpétuel de se répandre." To this characteristic was due his weakness as a dramatist, and this even his friends recognised. As the Abbé Arnaud put it: "Vous avez l'inverse du talent dramatique: il doit se transformer dans tous les personnages, et vous les transformez tous en vous." After the dry cynicism of his friends, one welcomes the expansiveness of Diderot, yet it must be admitted that there was vulgarity in his noisy emotions and his unfailing volubility; vulgarity, too, in his unpleasant habit of scenting the unsavoury side of any given subject and of elaborating it with all too evident enjoyment.

So far it has been difficult to see in Diderot a precursor, however remote, of Romanticism; his interests, his ideals, his character, his achievements—all make him a man who was not for all time, but for an age. One is startled to find Mme. d'Epinay—and the patroness of Rousseau was a good judge in such matters—testifying thus to the excellence of his Romantic credentials: "Quatre lignes de cet homme me font plus rêver et m'occupent plus qu'un ouvrage complet de nos prétendus beaux-esprits." But the problem is more or less solved when one turns to *Les Salons*, remembering that these "causeries

merveilleuses" are but faded relics of those real "cause-ries" which dazzled and enchanted his age.

It is a fact significant of the nature of Diderot's genius that this, one of the most valuable of his works both in itself and from an evolutionary point of view, should have been in the beginning casually thrown together at short notice to oblige Grimm, too lazy or too matter-of-fact to compose for his correspondents an account of the exhibitions at the Paris *Salon*. Much has been said of the defects of the book—of Diderot's habit of estimating a picture by the idea which inspired it, instead of by the way in which that idea was embodied; of the digressions which he frequently and unblushingly introduced; of the sentimentality which even here made him gush or weep over the works of his favourite, Greuze.

The most casual perusal of the maligned volume is enough to show the injustice of such a summary condemnation. Chateaubriand has been loudly praised by Brunetière for having substituted for the sterile criticism of defects the fruitful criticism of beauties, but it was Diderot who wrote: "S'il y a dans un ouvrage, dans un caractère, dans un tableau, dans une statue, un bel endroit, c'est là que mes yeux s'arrêtent; je ne vois que cela." Some of the leading ideas of the *Préface de Cromwell*, announced with such a flourish of trumpets as entirely new and exclusive, seem to be mere echoes of thoughts in the *Salons*: unconsciously, no doubt, Hugo has transferred to the realm of literature what Diderot wrote of painting. The famous simile which compares Classic literature to the well-kept trees at Marly, Romantic literature to a forest of the New World, is balanced exactly by this equally fine passage:

"Je regardais la cascade de Saint-Cloud et je me disais: 'Quelle énorme dépense pour faire une jolie chose, tandis

qu'il en aurait coûté la moitié pour faire une belle chose ! Qu'est-ce que tous ces petits jets d'eau, toutes ces petites chutes de gradins en gradins, en comparaison d'une grande nappe s'échappant de l'ouverture d'un rocher ou d'une caverne sombre, descendant avec fracas, rompue dans sa chute par des énormes pierres brutes, les blanchissant de son écume, formant dans son cours de profondes et larges ondes ; les masses rustiques du haut, tapissées de mousse, et couvertes ainsi que les côtés, d'arbres et de broussailles distribués avec toute l'horreur de la nature sauvage ? ”

Here, again, is the theory of the imitation of Nature: “ Quand on a bien choisi la nature, il est difficile de s'y conformer trop rigoureusement ; ” here a suggestion of the theory of the supernatural: “ Nous avons notre clair-obscur comme les peintres ”; of the grotesque: “ Tacite est le Rembrandt de la littérature: des ombres fortes et des clairs éblouissants.” In the same way we have a foreshadowing of the theory of *L'Art pour l'Art* years before the Preface of the *Orientales*: “ Je ne prétends point donner des règles au génie. Je dis à l'artiste, ‘ Faites ces choses, ’ comme je lui dirais, ‘ Si vous voulez peindre, ayez d'abord une toile. ’ ”

Similarly, reference to the text will show that perhaps too much has been made of Diderot's “ fundamental error of confounding nature and art,” as Goethe called it. The place he gives to sentiment, the more than lyrical pages in which he celebrates Greuze, show indeed that the charge is not without some justification. One finds too often such titles and comments as: “ *Un père qui vient de payer la dot de sa fille. . . . On se sent gagner d'une émotion douce en le regardant. . . . (Il faut) s'extasier sur ce morceau.* ” “ *La jeune fille qui pleure son oiseau mort. . . . La jolie élégie ! le charmant poème ! la belle idylle que Gessner en ferait ! . . . Quand on aperçoit ce morceau,*

on dit: Délicieux ! Si l'on s'y arrête ou qu'on y revienne, on s'écrie: Délicieux ! Délicieux !" Of *La Mère bien-aimée* we hear that "cela prêche la population . . . le bonheur et le prix inestimable de la paix domestique," while *Le mauvais fils puni* is said to give a valuable lesson to parents and children alike.

A reason for this sentimental attitude, and for the digressions which must also be admitted, is to be found—apart from Diderot's natural tendency towards irrelevance—in the state of art criticism at the time. When he took it up, the subject was without interest to his readers; it seemed as though the whole nation were colour-blind. It was an attitude of utter indifference that Diderot had to fight, and it was because the struggle was such an unequal one that he called to his aid all the devices of literature—a pastoral tale, a political discussion, an apostrophe to the artist or the model, an occasional impropriety. And he was certainly victorious: in one sense it was he who prepared the way for David and for the great series of military painters under the Empire, and so again did something to hasten the dawn of Romanticism. As Sainte-Beuve says: "Il éveilla chez ses contemporains, dont les plus délicats n'aimaient la peinture qu'en poésie, comme un sixième sens, et les fit entrer dans le domaine des formes et des couleurs par les idées." It was Mme. Necker who "n'aimait la peinture qu'en poésie," and her actual testimony is too valuable not to be quoted: "Je n'avais jamais vu dans les *Salons* que des couleurs plates et inanimées: c'est presque un nouveau sens que je dois à son génie."

Diderot was thus a leader in every forward movement of his day, and hence must have been to some extent a herald of Romanticism, though it seems that his direct

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influence was less than has sometimes been supposed. He was, indeed, an individualist, a man of sentiment, a lover of Nature; he was the most English of Frenchmen, one of the first preachers of that exoticism which was to characterise Romantic art; he broke absolutely the line of classic tradition: yet the mere fact that he possessed these Romantic traits and preceded the Romantic movement in point of time does not prove definitely that it owes anything to him. Indirectly, no doubt, his influence must have been considerable, in view of the way in which he coloured all the thought of his age, particularly with regard to art and to sentiment. But he wrote no one book to which we can point as his masterpiece, as the turning-point of the century, at which Classicism ends and Romanticism begins. Many of his works were published anonymously or under the names of his friends; many were forgotten as soon as the scandal which they aroused had subsided; some were never published at all until the manuscripts were exhumed by antiquarian research.

The dates of publication of his principal works form a valuable check on any estimate of his influence. *La Religieuse* appeared in 1796—rather too late in the day for an attack on Roman Catholicism—*Les Salons* by degrees from 1798 to 1857, so that these two may have been known, in part at least, to the Romantics. His two most characteristic novels, *Jacques le Fataliste* and *Le Neveu de Rameau*, have a more complicated history, for in some way the manuscripts were lost, to reappear in Germany. A German translation of part of the former work was published by Schiller in 1785, and further fragments by Mylius in 1792, but a French version did not appear until considerably later. *Le Neveu de Rameau* was first translated into German by Goethe, but though a retranslation of this version was fraudulently produced in France as the

French original, it was not until 1823 that this latter really appeared. The publication of the *Lettres à Sophie Volland* and the *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* in 1830 was plainly a result rather than a cause of the Romantic movement, and the *Rêve de d'Alembert*, not printed till more than fifty years after it was written, certainly had as little influence.

It seems enough to say, then, that Diderot was a forerunner and not a forbear of the Romantics. Even Sainte-Beuve, that tireless seeker after respectable literary ancestors, did not think of appropriating him when he laid violent hands on Ronsard and Chénier. To him and to his circle the name Diderot denoted a certain Encyclopædist, a sedition-monger and a free-thinker, an unscrupulous foe of *le trône et l'autel*, dangerous enough in his time, but quite harmless because quite forgotten in theirs. Yet if they never looked back to him, he certainly looked forward to them, and prophesied with remarkable accuracy the date of their appearance:

“ Quand verra-t-on naître des poètes ? Ce sera après le temps de désastres et de grands malheurs, lorsque les peuples harassés commenceront à respirer. Alors les imaginations, ébranlées par des spectacles terribles, peindront des choses inconnues à ceux qui n'en ont pas été les témoins.”

CHAPTER II

ROUSSEAU

THE sensitiveness which was one of the least attractive traits of Diderot's character, and which caused him once to write in a petulant vein of Rousseau, "Il dit du mal du comique larmoyant parce que c'est mon genre," became exaggerated in Jean-Jacques himself into a self-consciousness which often led him to absurdities. If there was one thing more than another on which he prided himself, it was his intimate knowledge of his own temperament. Not only, said he, did he understand himself better than anyone else could—which we admit readily enough—but no one else, he added, understood him at all—and this we may take leave to doubt. Over and over again comes the cry, which would be arrogant were it not so pitiful, "Je connais mes défauts et je sens vivement mes vices," "Personne au monde ne me connaît que moi seul." His *Confessions* and his correspondence contain page after page of self-examination. The subject of Jean-Jacques was ever one of inexhaustible interest for Rousseau, though at times he would admit that others might find it less absorbing. But in one point at least he did not know himself, or he would never have written: "De tous les hommes que j'ai connus, celui dont le caractère dérive le plus pleinement de son seul tempérament est Jean-Jacques. Il est ce que l'a fait la nature: l'éducation ne l'a que bien peu modifié."¹

¹ *Dialogues : Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques.*

One acquits him here, as ever, of intentional inaccuracy, but the mildest of critics cannot help suggesting that his memory has played him yet another trick. He had certainly forgotten a good deal when he could airily sweep aside the influence of Geneva, the strait-laced, intolerant city of the *Institutio*, which was at the same time the spiritual home of Julie and Saint-Preux, the charmingly provincial town depicted in the *Lettre à d'Alembert*, with its old-time simplicity and its almost rustic joys. Yet the influence of Geneva never failed, and the title of citizen was one which he rejoiced to obtain and struggled desperately to keep. "Mon Dieu!" he exclaims, "avec le cœur du Genevois, avec une ville aussi riante, un pays aussi charmant, un gouvernement aussi juste, des plaisirs si vrais et si purs, et tout ce qu'il faut pour savoir les goûter, à quoi tient-il que nous n'adorions tous la patrie?"¹

He had forgotten, too, to take into account the facts of his ancestry, if, indeed, he knew much about them, or was not ashamed of what he knew. For his immediate forbears were certainly no better than they should have been: father and mother, uncles and aunts, were a lazy, happy-go-lucky, pleasure-seeking tribe, maintaining a somewhat precarious position just within the pale of respectability, regarded with suspicion by the better-class citizens. Yet the Rousseaus of some two centuries back had been ancestors of whom one might well be proud—French of the French, possessing all the qualities of their race, and in addition that un-Gallic persistency of purpose which had driven them into exile with Calvin, faithful to the land of their adoption, yet still more devoted to the land which had rejected them. Rousseau's case was, indeed, that of Mme. de Staël: "Naître Français avec un caractère étranger . . . c'est un contraste qui abîme la vie." In

¹ *Lettre à d'Alembert*.

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the light of these considerations it is easy enough to explain what Rousseau complacently regarded as an insoluble mystery, the union of "un tempérament très ardent, des passions vives, impétueuses, et des idées lentes à naître, embarrassées." And his education was not such as to counteract these inherent tendencies. Not for nothing was he wont to sit up all night till the dawn broke and the swallows began to twitter under the eaves, reading lachrymose romances with that good-for-nothing, sentimental father who would at last say, with unexpected accuracy, "Allons nous coucher; je suis plus enfant que toi." The child shed "des seaux de larmes" over *Cyrus* and *Clélie*, *Pharamond* and *Cléopâtre*, and this "goût héroïque et romanesque" was intensified by his reading of Plutarch at the tender age of six.

Then came his period of apprenticeship to the engraver, when the budding Quixote began to develop with painful rapidity the traits of Sancho Panza. He still spent all his money and much of his master's time on romances, but he also stole the strawberries, played truant with other boys as idle as himself, scamped his work, and made himself generally objectionable. His succeeding experiences, too, affected him profoundly: his *vagabondage* through Savoy, his degrading experiences as a catechumen at the Turin hospice, as a dishonest lackey, as the strolling showman of "la curiosité," and, by no means least, the all-pervading influence of Mme. de Warens, and that "education" of which one may charitably say that, though disastrous in its results, it was at least excellent in its intentions.

Enough has been said to explain the origin if not the development of those un-French qualities which constitute Rousseau's claim to be called the father of Romanti-

cism in France. First of all comes that fierce individualism which made him regard his follies and his vices as not merely excusable but even as interesting and admirable. Utter shamelessness, or a noble sincerity, as he preferred to term it, is called upon, not to cover, but to display a multitude of sins. And "avec tout cela," he declares, "je mourrai plein d'espoir dans le Dieu suprême, et très persuadé que, de tous les hommes que j'ai connus en ma vie, aucun ne fut meilleur que moi."¹ To trace the growth of the sentiment which wrecked his life is a depressing task. It began, no doubt, in that pure and genuine love of solitude which made him celebrate as the happiest days of his life "ceux de ma retraite . . . (de) mes promenades solitaires, ces jours rapides mais délicieux que j'ai passés tout entiers avec moi seul, avec ma bonne et simple gouvernante, avec mon chien bien-aimé, ma vieille chatte, avec les oiseaux de la campagne et les biches de la forêt, avec la nature entière et son inconcevable auteur."²

Yet how much mud soon polluted this clear stream ! There was a hatred of society due partly to the timidity one would expect in a provincial suddenly plunged into the life of a great capital, but due even more to the wounded vanity of one who had tried without success to assume its manners. Rousseau, of course, denied that the grapes were ever attractive, but one thinks of his gold-laced waistcoat, his sword, and his lace ruffles, and reflects that it was only when these blandishments had failed to charm a *blasé* and unsympathetic world that he took to exaggerating the boorishness he had been unable to conceal. It was an uncomfortable sense of inferiority which led the modern Timon to assume an attitude of lofty indifference

¹ *Lettre à Malesherbes*, January 4, 1762.

² *Ibid.*, letter of January 26.

and to vaunt his "indomptable esprit de liberté." It is with the melancholy accents of experience that he declares: "Le *je* est presque aussi scrupuleusement banni de la scène française (*sc.* de la société française) que des écrits du Port-Royal; et les passions humaines. . . n'y parlent jamais que par *on*."¹

His contemporaries, while yielding to the charm of this independent spirit, were under no illusions as to its origin. "Tout ce qu'il veut," wrote d'Alembert, "c'est de faire parler de lui; le plus mauvais tour qu'on puisse lui jouer c'est d'empêcher le plus qu'on en parle. C'est l'avis de Mlle. de Lespinasse et de toutes les personnes à qui j'ai pu en parler." Certainly there was in Rousseau that desire to *ahurir le bourgeois* which animated his literary sons *les jeunes France*; and is not his Armenian costume the sartorial ancestor of Gautier's scarlet doublet? What he gained by it all in the eyes of the despised *bourgeois* is seen by the following conversation:

Doctor Johnson : Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I should like to have him work in the plantations.

Boswell : Sir, do you think him as bad a man as Voltaire ?

Johnson : Why, Sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them.²

The opening passages of the *Confessions* are the manifesto of individualism triumphant, already crossing the line which divides it from egoism, even from mania.

"Je forme une entreprise qui n'eut jamais d'exemple, et dont l'exécution n'aura point d'imitateurs. . . . Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j'ai vus; j'ose croire n'être fait comme aucun de ceux qui existent."

¹ *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, ii. 17.

² Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, year 1766.

How different from the smilingly apologetic manner of Montaigne ! Naturally enough, Rousseau's sublime sense of his own importance was not without its ridiculous side. He writes in all seriousness to M. de Luxembourg :

“ Je n'ignore pas que mon séjour ici, qui n'est rien pour vous, est pour moi d'une extrême conséquence. Je sais que, quand je n'y aurais couché qu'une nuit, le public, la postérité peut-être, me demanderont raison de cette seule nuit.”

Both the public and posterity have shown themselves considerably more indulgent, or less interested, than he fondly imagined.

The beginning of this same letter, however, shows the ultimate term of his mania, when even the *sensible* Julie de Lespinasse, most fervent of his admirers, could only excuse his conduct to the justly indignant Hume on the ground that he must be utterly demented. This so-called letter of thanks commences thus :

“ Monsieur, votre maison est charmante; le séjour en est délicieux. Il le serait plus encore si la magnificence que j'y trouve et les attentions qui m'y suivent me laissaient un peu moins apercevoir que je ne suis pas chez moi.”¹

Rousseau's views on the unlimited rights of the Superman are, indeed, painfully modern.

Intimately connected with this side of Rousseau's character was the extreme importance which he attached to the emotions. We have noticed this tendency in the child, and have seen it develop year by year till, as he himself put it, “ Je n'avais aucune idée des choses, que tous les sentiments m'étaient déjà connus. Je n'avais

¹ Lettre à M. de Luxembourg, May 27, 1759.

rien conçu, j'avais tout senti." For himself the consequences were deplorable; for his age and for posterity they were, in part at least, beneficial. *Sensibilité* had been fashionable for many years; it was Rousseau who gave it depth and reality, who, for good or for evil, transformed it into emotionalism. How contemptuous is Saint-Preux's description to Julie of "un des sujets favoris de ces paisibles entretiens—le sentiment, mot par lequel il ne faut pas entendre un épanchement affectueux dans le sein de l'amour ou de l'amitié, cela serait d'une fadeur à mourir; c'est le sentiment mis en grandes maximes générales." Saint-Preux was certainly well qualified to judge—his own *épanchements affectueux* were of a far more decided type. In Byronic tones he cries:

"O, Julie, que c'est un fatal présent du ciel qu'une âme sensible! Celui qui l'a reçue doit s'attendre à n'avoir que peine et douleur sur la terre. Vil jouet de l'air et des saisons, le soleil ou les brouillards, l'air couvert ou serein régleront sa destinée, et il sera content ou triste au gré des vents."

And again, out-Heroding Herod:

"Où me conduisent ces chevaux avec tant de vitesse? Où m'entraîne cet homme qui se dit mon ami? Est-ce loin de toi, Julie? Est-ce par ton ordre? Est-ce en des lieux où tu n'es pas? . . . D'où viens-je? où vais-je? et pourquoi tant de diligence? Avez-vous peur, cruels, que je ne coure assez tôt à ma perte? O amitié! ô amour! est-ce là votre accord, sont-ce là vos bienfaits?"

Rousseau's whole moral system, if system it can be called, depends on sentiment. In his glorification of the instincts he seems to follow Pope, a translation of whose *Essay on Man* he had read during his first stay at Paris, and which, he told Voltaire, had soothed his ills and

strengthened his patience. The influence of such passages as these is indubitable:

“ And Reason raise o’er Instinct as you can,
 In this ’tis God directs, in that ’tis Man. . . .
 Passions, tho’ selfish, if their means be fair,
 ’List under reason and deserve her care;
 Those that, imparted, court a nobler aim,
 Exalt their kind, and take some virtue’s name.”

Similarly, Rousseau, writing to a would-be disciple, declared: “ La vertu, Monsieur, n’est pas une science qui s’apprenne avec tant d’appareil. Pour être vertueux, il suffit de vouloir l’être.”¹ So he said at the end of his career; in his first work he expressed exactly the same opinion, speaking of “ la vertu, la science des âmes simples,” of conscience, “ un guide intérieur, bien plus infaillible que tous les livres.” His *Vicaire Savoyard* is in complete agreement: “ Tout ce que je sens être bien est bien, et tout ce que je sens être mal est mal: le meilleur de tous les casuistes est la conscience.”

It sounds a facile system, yet the story of Julie, essentially one of a severe moral struggle, is enough to show that in reality it was as exacting as Geneva itself could demand. For we must remember that Rousseau, with all the vague deism he imbibed from Pope or from his French contemporaries, was nevertheless the man who brought back the idea of conscience, of inward righteousness, into what had become nothing more than the ethical branch of social observances, the man who substituted a sense of sin for a sense of the importance of etiquette. All his novels were written with a purpose: “ l’amour du bien, qui n’est jamais sorti de mon cœur, les tourna vers des objets utiles, et dont la morale eût pu faire son profit.” In *La Nouvelle*

¹ “ Lettre à un jeune homme qui demandait à s’établir à Montmorency.”

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Héloïse he preaches as much as ever Richardson did in *Clarissa* ; he points out, indeed, that “ si Julie n’a point les sublimes vertus de Clarisse, elle a une vertu plus sage et plus judicieuse, qui n’est pas soumise à l’opinion.”¹

How close is the link which connects his religion with that of Chateaubriand is seen by the following ‘ reasons ’ he gives for his faith :

“ Non, j’ai trop souffert en cette vie pour n’en pas attendre une autre. Toutes les subtilités de la métaphysique ne me feront pas douter un moment de l’immortalité de l’âme et d’une Providence bien-faisante. Je la sens, je la crois, je la veux, je l’espère ; je la défendrai jusqu’à mon dernier soupir.”

Even so was Chateaubriand to declare, “ I wept and I believed.” And in Rousseau, too, we see the source of the sentimental optimism of Lamartine, in part of Hugo’s and of Alfred de Musset’s as well. Voltaire might indeed be very much distressed by the earthquake of Lisbon ; Rousseau, as Pope would have done, cheerfully dismissed it as a mere incident—an unfortunate one no doubt, but still without any importance in the general beneficent plan of things. “ Ce désordre qui vous révolte, ce n’est qu’une dissonance momentanée dans l’harmonie universelle. L’homme ne vit qu’à moitié durant sa vie, et la vie de l’âme ne commence qu’à la mort du corps. C’est alors que tout rentre dans l’ordre.”

It is the *Profession de Foi d’un Vicaire Savoyard* which gives us Rousseau’s complete *apologia*, and which reveals, too, motives and tendencies that he was far from recognising. One can hardly wonder that his fellow-citizens regarded their prophet without enthusiasm when they found that the exposition of his principles began thus :

¹ Corresp. Ined., quoted by Texte.

“ On était en été; nous nous levâmes à la pointe du jour. Il me mena hors de la ville, sur une haute colline, au-dessous de laquelle passait le Pô, dont on voyait le cours à travers les fertiles rives qu’il baigne; dans l’éloignement, l’immense chaîne des Alpes couronnait le paysage; les rayons du soleil levant rasaient déjà les plaines, et, se projetant sur les champs par longues ombres, les arbres, les coteaux, les maisons enrichissaient de mille accidents de lumière le plus beau tableau dont l’œil humain puisse être frappé.”

It is the favourite procedure of Bernardin, of Chateaubriand, of Lamartine, this appeal to the beauties of Nature instead of to the facts of dogma, this pantheism masking itself under the guise of Christianity.

And so, from individualism, from sentiment, from religion, we come to perhaps the most Romantic of Rousseau’s characteristics, his love of Nature. Here as elsewhere, while one would not detract from the importance or the originality of his work, it becomes evident that to some extent he was but the *porte-voix* of his age. Like Molière, “ il prend son bien où il le trouve ”; like Molière, too, he makes it so thoroughly his own that one is apt to forget that it ever belonged to anyone else.

Take first of all the theory with which his name is most closely identified, that of the pernicious effects of society and the delights of a state of nature. Few ideas have had a more distinguished history. To go no farther back than the Renaissance, we may mention the essay (*Des Cannibales*) in which Montaigne describes the happy lot of the Red Indians—a description borrowed by Shakespeare for Gonzalo’s ideal republic in the *Tempest*. The next century is an age of sublime self-satisfaction, and one cannot believe that Louis XIV. ever felt the slightest desire to be a cannibal chief, though even

here we find La Fontaine's *Le Paysan du Danube*. Fifty years later all this is changed: Montesquieu and his Troglodytes, Pope and his "poor Indian," Diderot, above all, with his reminiscences of Hobbes and Locke, all show that the "state of nature" was more admired than ever, and all, no doubt, helped to suggest to Rousseau the idealistic pictures which he draws in such words as these:

"Tant que les hommes se contentèrent de leurs cabanes rustiques, tant qu'ils se bornèrent à coudre leurs habits de peaux avec des épines ou des arêtes, à se parer de plumes et de coquillages, à se peindre le corps de diverses couleurs, à perfectionner ou embellir leurs arcs et leurs flèches, à tailler avec des pierres tranchantes quelque canots de pêcheurs ou quelques grossiers instruments de musique . . . ils vécurent libres, sains, bons et heureux autant qu'ils pouvaient l'être."

Paul and Virginie, Atala and Chactas, are the lineal descendants of these free and fortunate beings, but the later Romantics were very little attracted by them; the ideal was too simple, and perhaps the Revolution had shown it to be too chimerical as well.

It was chiefly by his descriptions of nature that Rousseau enthralled his contemporaries and influenced his successors. And here he had the advantage of writing *con amore*: he did not occupy himself with the theme because it happened to be the fashion, as did the 'Nature' poets of his day; or because he felt that in accordance with his principles he ought to make it the fashion, as we sometimes suspect Diderot of doing. He wrote, too, with experience: beautiful as are some of Diderot's descriptions, the very way in which they are scattered promiscuously throughout his work tends to remind us that after all their author was an incorrigible *citadin*. But Rousseau is no mere theorist; the scenes he describes

are scenes he has actually visited, and just as the reality of his emotions had enchanted a sentimental age, so the reality of his descriptions appealed to what was also an age of reason.

His pictures of the wild landscapes of the Alps are certainly the most 'Romantic' part of his work. At a time when most Frenchmen, like most Englishmen, affected to regard a mountain as a "considerable protuberance," we welcome such a passage as this:

"Tantôt d'immenses roches pendaient en ruines au-dessus de ma tête. Tantôt de hautes et bruyantes cascades m'inondaient de leur épais brouillard. Tantôt un torrent éternel ouvrait à mes côtés un abîme dont les yeux n'osaient sonder la profondeur."¹

We are told in so many words that Rousseau cannot admire a flat country: he must have torrents, rocks, black pinewoods, precipices. He prefers the wild and 'romantic' shores of the Lake of Bienne to the placid, smiling banks of the Lake of Geneva. He is one of those "contemplatifs solitaires qui aiment à s'enivrer à loisir des charmes de la nature, et à se recueillir dans un silence que ne trouble aucun bruit que le cri des aigles, le ramage entrecoupé de quelques oiseaux, et le roulement des torrents qui tombent de la montagne."² And the following passage, perhaps the most significant of all, contains not a word that Chateaubriand or Hugo would have disavowed:

"De noirs sapins entremêlés de hêtres prodigieux, dont plusieurs tombés de vieillesse et entrelacés les uns dans les autres, fermaient ce réduit de barrières impénétrables. . . . Le duc, la chevêche, et l'orfraie, faisaient entendre leurs cris dans les fentes de la montagne. . . . Je me comparais à ces grands voyageurs qui découvrent

¹ *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, i. 23.

² *Rêveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire: V^e Promenade.*

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une île déserte, et je me disais avec complaisance : Sans doute je suis le premier mortel qui ait pénétré jusqu'ici."¹

Again, Rousseau is the first to regard Nature, not as "un paysage quelconque," but as the living source of strength and consolation. Like Lamartine, he can say, "J'allais me cacher de mes peines dans la solitude où je versais des larmes quand j'étais heureux."² What could be more Romantic? The *Rêveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire*, by its very title, suggests the attitude of poets of a later day; it is filled with the day-dreams, "confuses mais délicieuses," which enchanted him as he lay in his boat, drifting with the current, or sat on the wind-swept shores of the Lake of Bienné, or beside a brook chattering over its gravelly bed. And his reveries, like those of his successors, often end on a note of melancholy, of sorrow for an "état fugitif qui nous laisse encore le cœur inquiet et vide, qui nous fait regretter quelque chose avant, ou désirer encore quelque chose après."³ The famous letter (iv. 17) in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* which supplied the theme of Lamartine's *Le Lac* and Victor Hugo's *Tristesse d'Olympio* is a case in point.

But it would be a mistake to emphasise too strongly this side of Rousseau's feeling for Nature. In the *Rêveries* there is a passage concerning his other lake (of Bienné); it begins on the orthodox Romantic note, but it ends placidly in full eighteenth century:

"J'allais volontiers m'asseoir au bord du lac . . . là, le bruit des vagues et l'agitation de l'eau, fixant mes sens et chassant de mon âme toute autre agitation, la plongeait dans une rêverie délicieuse. . . . De temps à autre

¹ *VII^e Promenade.* ² *Lettres sur la Vertu et le Bonheur*, iv.

³ *Rêveries: V^e Promenade.*

naissait quelque faible et courte réflexion sur l'instabilité des choses de ce monde . . . mais bientôt ces impressions légères s'effaçaient."¹

To Malesherbes he states in so many words that he is *not* unhappy and is *not* consumed with melancholy and chagrin. Even more than his torrents and precipices he loves the simple, everyday aspects of Nature. He admires the Reuss, "une très jolie rivière, claire et brillante comme l'argent, où les truites ont bien de la peine à se cacher dans des touffes d'herbes"²; he is in ecstasy over his Ermitage, "ce lieu solitaire et très agréable . . . solitaire plutôt que sauvage . . . (qui) avait de ces beautés touchantes."³

In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, too, his imagination loves to linger not only round the rocks of la Meillerie, but round the simple rustic sights and sounds of Julie's home at Vevey. In tones that recall the *Vicar of Wakefield* he describes the pairs of birds who came to nest in the garden, and how Julie gave them little heaps of wool and moss to help in the building; the farmyard and the dairy; the vintage, with all the work among the vines and at the presses; the meals in the open air; the evening dance in the farm kitchen; the end of the day, when "chacun . . . va se coucher content d'une journée passée dans le travail, la gaieté, l'innocence, et qu'on ne serait pas fâché de recommencer le lendemain, le surlendemain, et toute sa vie."⁴

The *Confessions* give us the fine description of a night he spent in the open air, watching the Rhone, coloured by the rosy clouds which remained in the sky long after the sun had set, listening to the nightingales which sang all the night through, and were still singing

¹ *Réveries: V^e Promenade.*

² *Lettre à M. de Luxembourg*, January 28, 1763.

³ *Confessions*, ii. 9.

⁴ *Nouvelle Héloïse*, v. 7.

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when he woke at dawn. Here, too, we are told of a delightful picnic he enjoyed with two young ladies of the neighbourhood: the fun they had in crossing a stream by stepping-stones, the charming arbour they found, and the delicious cherries they ate. A letter to Malesherbes describes how he used to pass his days at L'Ermitage, pottering about the house in the morning, in the afternoon slinking cautiously off before visitors could possibly arrive, to spend the rest of the day in the forest among the gold of the broom and the purple of the heather, with his faithful dog as his only companion.

In his love of the open road Rousseau shows himself a true son of the family of Montaigne, of Borrow, of Stevenson, far too robust and healthy-minded for the Bunthornes of 1830. "La vue de la campagne, la succession des aspects agréables, le grand air, le grand appétit, la bonne santé que je gagne en marchant, la liberté du cabaret"¹—such are his simple needs. And when one reads that "en arrivant je ne songeais qu'à bien dîner," that "j'étais de si bonne humeur que j'allais chantant tout le long du chemin,"² one recalls with a smile those far more edifying and orthodox pilgrims, René and Childe Harold, who traversed the whole of Europe—with special attention to ruins, tombs, volcanoes, and similar attractive features—and never once burst into song or considered the vulgar topic of food. More than once, too, La Fontaine's aspirations after solitude, hygienic rather than æsthetic, are recalled by such a phrase as this:

"Le sentiment de l'existence dépouillé de toute autre affection est par lui-même un sentiment précieux."³

His conception of Nature is thus far more complete than that of his successors, as well as that of the Classics

¹ *Confessions* i. 4.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Rêveries: V^e Promenade.*

who preceded him. The Classics, so far as they considered Nature at all, preferred its ordinary aspects, while the Romantics deliberately sought out the grandiose and the unusual. Rousseau, however, loves the infinitely small as well as the infinitely great, and can produce vignettes in the style of La Fontaine as easily as paintings on the "ten-league canvas" beloved by Hugo.

Rousseau belongs to his age, then, in a certain epicurean enjoyment of Nature; we find, too, that he is linked to it by his interest in Nature's scientific aspect. To be sure, he is graceless enough to remark that "la botanique est l'étude d'un oisif et paresseux solitaire,"¹ yet we discover from the *Rêveries* that he was imbued with the true scientific spirit. He wanders from plant to plant "pour les examiner, pour comparer leurs divers caractères . . . la raison et la fin de leurs structures diverses."² When he has fled to the Ile de Saint-Pierre, he conceives the idea of a *Flora Petrinsularis*, and in a passage worthy of Bernardin notes: "La fourchure des deux longues étamines de la brunelle, le ressort de celles de l'ortie et de la pariétaire, l'explosion du fruit de la balsamine et de la capsule du buis."³ Like Bernardin, too, he uses his observation of Nature as evidence for the truth of religion and the existence of Providence; he is unable to get beyond the idea of man as the centre of the universe, and blandly remarks that "les plantes semblent avoir été semées avec profusion sur la terre, comme les étoiles dans le ciel, pour inviter l'homme, par l'attrait du plaisir, et de la curiosité, à l'étude de la nature."

It is only fitting that such lyric qualities—individualism, sentiment, love of Nature—as were Rousseau's should

¹ *Rêveries* : VII^e Promenade.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Rêveries* : V^e Promenade.

be enshrined in a lyric style. In this respect he is most truly an innovator, with only Diderot as a possible rival. Nothing could have been more foreign either to the temperament or to the education of Jean-Jacques than the prevailing style of his age, which in prose as well as in verse has been aptly described as a row of little knives ranged side by side in a case. Rousseau's feelings were at once too violent and too honest to allow him to indulge in the pin-pricks of Voltaire. He preferred, like Dr. Johnson, to knock his adversary down, though his letter to M. de Lastic, the nobleman who had been pleased to appropriate old Mme. Levasseur's pot of butter, shows that when he chose he could handle the rapier with distinguished success. And his style, too, was influenced to the very end by the fact that he was after all a provincial. He has both the faults and the merits of the provinces: on the one hand a constant striving after the grand style, as represented by euphuism, false elegance, and declamation; on the other, immunity from the narrowing tendencies of conventional taste.

The examples cited throughout this chapter are perhaps sufficient to show the essentially lyric tone of his work, yet the following little ode to Spring, pitched in a lower key than most of the others, is as significant as any:

“Quoiqu'il fit froid et qu'il y eût même encore de la neige, la terre commençait à végéter; on voyait des violettes et des primevères; les bourgeons des arbres commençaient à poindre, et la nuit même de mon arrivée fut marquée par le premier chant du rossignol.”

Here we are reminded of Victor Hugo in the *Contemplations*—the Hugo of the *Châtiments* is represented also. The *confédérés* of Poland, who were so unlucky as to disagree with him about the best means of reforming the constitution of their country, are described by their guide, philo-

sopher, and friend as a "ramas de toutes sortes d'aventuriers, d'intrigants et de brigands, encouragés par le fanatisme des moines et l'imbécillité du peuple." Sheer abuse this may be, but so is much of the satire of Chénier and Hugo. The letter to Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, shows plainly enough to what source can be traced the declamatory violence of Figaro, of the orators of the Revolution, of most of the Romantics:

"Vous me traitez d'impie ! et de quelle impiété pouvez-vous m'accuser, moi qui n'ai jamais parlé de l'Être suprême que pour lui rendre la gloire qui lui est due, ni du prochain que pour porter tout le monde à l'aimer ? . . . Vous me traitez d'imposteur, et pourquoi ? Dans votre manière de penser, j'erre ; mais où est mon imposture ? . . . Que vous discourez à votre aise, vous autres hommes constitués en dignité ! Ne reconnaissant de droits que les vôtres, ni de lois que celles que vous imposez, loin de vous faire un devoir d'être justes, vous ne vous croyez pas même obligés d'être humains."¹

In another important respect, too, Rousseau's style is prophetic. Nothing is more instructive than his own account (in the *Confessions*) of the genesis of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. "Je me figurai l'amour, l'amitié"; these two sentiments, analogous but different, are personified in Julie and Claire, animated respectively by sensibility and kindness, "l'une brune et l'autre blonde, l'une vive et l'autre douce, l'une sage et l'autre faible." After hesitating as to whether his scene shall be "dans les vallées de la Thessalie . . . ou aux îles Borromées," he finally decides on the Lake of Geneva, on account of the "contraste des positions."² Of set purpose he makes Wolmar a philosopher and Julie a Christian. This use of formal antithesis, so different from the less rigid use of contrast

¹ *Lettre à Chr. de Beaumont: Conclusion.*

² *Confessions*, ii. 9.

in a writer such as Molière, recurs time after time, so that even if Rousseau had not called attention to it we should have realised easily enough that it formed a prominent part of his stock in trade.

But now let us turn to the Preface of any Romantic drama whatever. That of *Les Burgraves* states that “(il *fallait* montrer) la grande figure de la servitude; il *fallait* que cette figure fût une femme . . . il *fallait* que cette femme personnifiât la fatalité . . . il *fallait* qu’au milieu de ces princes bandits un empereur apparût.” The tone of this recalls Rousseau’s dictatorial “Il me *fallait* un lac.” Vigny tells us that in *Chatterton* “j’ai voulu montrer l’homme spiritualiste étouffé par une société matérialiste”—symbol and antithesis again. Even the matter-of-fact Dumas pompously announces that in *Charles VII. chez ses grands vassaux* “Yaqoub était . . . la représentation de l’esclavage de l’Orient; Raymond, de la servitude de l’Occident; le comte, c’était la féodalité; le roi, la monarchie.” Of a truth, Rousseau has a heavy responsibility here!

But Rousseau’s style contains much that belongs to the eighteenth century. As might be expected of this constant reader of the *romans à longue haleine*, preciosity is not absent from his work. Saint-Preux’s exclamation, “Mon cœur est inondé des pleurs qui coulent de tes yeux,” reminds one inevitably of “Brûlé de plus de feux que je n’en allumai.” Rousseau, indeed, gives himself badly away when he informs M. de Luxembourg that the banks of the Reuss will in time become as charming as those of the Lignon, “et il ne leur manquera plus que des Astrées, des Silvandres, et un d’Urfé.” Can it be that he himself aspired to become the d’Urfé of the banks of Lake Lemman?

Frigid rhetoric appears ever and again: one of the islands in the Lake of Bienne is being made larger by silt from the other; even so, declares Rousseau, the goods of the poor go to increase the store of the rich. Pseudo-classicism raises its head frequently enough: Julie's vines "étaie(nt) aux yeux les dons du père Lyée"; Emile likes walking because "voyager à pied, c'est voyager comme Thalès, Platon, et Pythagore." The Poles are advised not to fortify their open towns: "comme Thémistocle emmenait Athènes sur sa flotte, emportez au besoin vos villes sur vos chevaux."

It is easy to see that, possessing the Romantic qualities enumerated above, Rousseau would be strongly attracted by the literatures of the North. As Mme. de Staël remarked of these kindred spirits, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, etc., sont tous, même à leur insu, de l'école germanique." But the way in which Rousseau was affected by the literature of England in particular, and passed this influence on to his countrymen, cannot adequately be dealt with here. It is enough at present to mention the names of Locke, whose naturalistic philosophy influenced him so strongly, and whose *Thoughts concerning Education* had so much in common with *Emile*; of Defoe, whose *Robinson Crusoe* was to be the sole reading of the child who must avoid La Fontaine as the plague; of Richardson, whose *Clarissa* Rousseau admired, envied, imitated, and then patronised. One must not forget Pope, the source of so much of his sentimentalism, and the *bourgeois* dramatists Lillo and Moore, whose highly moral and sentimental works alone escaped the strictures contained in the *Lettre à d'Alembert*. On the other hand, it is Rousseau's vogue which later on insures

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the popularity in France of all those English authors whose spirit had something in common with his : Sterne and the sentimental novelists ; the Nature poets ; Young, the poet of melancholy ; Ossian, the bard of Nature and of melancholy alike.

CHAPTER III

THE SENTIMENT OF NATURE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE absence of any feeling for Nature in the seventeenth century is a commonplace of criticism, but it is not always so clearly recognised that in the following period, an age even more sociable and even more attached to the pleasures of the town, this sentiment was, at least in appearance, very strongly developed, though it may not have been in reality very deeply rooted. Fundamentally polite society was unaffected by the new movement inaugurated by Rousseau, yet, just as it had seized upon the fashion of *sensibilité*, so it now took up the fashion of a love of Nature. That it was a fashion and no more is proved fairly conclusively by the fact that the best way of tracing its development is to study the numerous references made in contemporary works to the art of landscape gardening; yet straws show which way the wind is blowing, and such a study will present one aspect, if a frivolous one, of that return to Nature which gave the Romantics the strongest plank in their platform.

From Boileau's prim, pretty garden at Auteuil, then, with its yews and honeysuckles carefully trained by Antoine, we may pass to Molière's oft-quoted "*lieu champêtre mais agréable*," and thence to the wonders of Versailles, Marly, Saint-Cloud, the Trianon—all those monuments of a truly royal love of luxury and desire of subjugating Nature. That this latter was Louis XIV.'s

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chief motive was a self-evident proposition to Saint-Simon at least, and his pictures of Versailles are by no means as flattering as one would have expected of the courtier who was capable of telling his host when caught in a shower that "la pluie de Marly ne mouillait pas." Whether it be due to his constant hatred of the King, or a vague dissatisfaction with the classic ideal, certain it is that he describes Versailles as a ruinously expensive masterpiece in the worst possible taste: "la violence qui y a été faite partout à la nature repousse et dégoûte malgré soi."

But if, indeed, Saint-Simon honestly admired Nature unadorned by art, it was long before he found any disciples. Diderot, many years later, as we have seen, was inspired by a genuine love of Nature in the Romantic sense, yet the following passage represents another side of his character, and the glorified Vauxhall which it describes was one of the most cherished ideals of the age:

"A des parterres émaillés de fleurs succèdent de grands tapis de mousse, et des gazons dont cent ruisseaux entretiennent la verdure. On y rencontre des bois sombres où mille routes s'entrecoupent, des labyrinthes où l'on se plaît à s'égarer. . . . On y a pratiqué des cabinets destinés à divers usages. L'on voit dans les uns des tables servies avec délicatesse, et des buffets chargés de vins et de liqueurs exquises. Dans les autres, des tables de jeu, des fiches, des jetons."¹

Society in general regarded life in the country as quite impossible without such amenities as these, and only just bearable with them. Diderot's words form the text of more than one *fête champêtre* of Watteau or of Poussin. Mme. du Deffand hated to stir from her home in the Rue St. Dominique, and regarded country-house visits as prolonged and unpleasant duty calls. Nature, moonlight, a

¹ *L'Allée des Fleurs: Promenades d'un Sceptique.*

fine summer day, she contemptuously dismissed as *romans*, and the President Hénault—not one of the most romantic of men, one would have thought—was forced to apologise to her for all his “ruisseaux, passés, présents, et à venir, pour leurs frères les oiseaux, pour leurs cousins les ormeaux.” He is cured of such tastes now, he ruefully remarks, and no doubt she will like his letters all the better for it. And fifty years later we find Mme. de Staël treading high and disposedly the avenues of Coppet, blind to their beauties and engrossed in discussions on philology or art.

That so many people should have given themselves the uncongenial task of posing as lovers of Nature is due largely to the influence of England, reinforced by that of Rousseau. While English parks were being laid out in the classical style of Le Nôtre, the so-called English garden was enjoying an absurd vogue in France. The movement began long before Rousseau. Montesquieu, for example, had an English garden at La Brède; Muralt, in his *Lettres sur les Anglais et les Français* (1725)—a book to which Rousseau owed most of his ideas on the subject—praised the landscape gardens which Le Nôtre had declared himself unable with all his art to equal. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse* Julie's Elysée is described at considerable length. This wild and solitary place, an orchard rather than a park, has nothing in common with the conventional pleasure-gardens of the time, with their fine porcelain vases “full of nothingness,” their walks of many-coloured sand, their avenues which are more like forests of masts or hop-poles than anything else. Here, on the other hand, all is freshness and shade. Among the thick green grass, mingled with thyme and other sweet-scented herbs, runs a limpid stream. Here and there, without order, are scattered clumps of rose-trees, of raspberry-canes—yea,

even of gooseberry bushes; among them are thickets of lilac, elder, syringa, broom, over which creep garlands of clematis, bryony, hops, wild vine. Birds flutter from branch to branch; trout swim fearlessly in the stream. The moss is a particularly important feature of the Elysée; it is the genuine article, kindly sent direct from England by Mylord Edouard. And when Saint-Preux has admired till he can admire no more, Rousseau very properly points the moral of all this charming rusticity:

“ ‘La patience et le temps,’ dit M. de Wolmar, ‘ont fait ce miracle. Ce sont des expédients dont les gens riches ne s’avisent guère dans leurs plaisirs. Toujours pressés de jouir, la force et l’argent sont les seuls moyens qu’ils connaissent; ils ont des oiseaux dans des cages, et des amis à tant par mois.’ ”¹

After this, the enthusiasm of the public knew no bounds. Not only was the English garden to be admired for its fidelity to Nature: it served a moral purpose too—it purified the emotions, it counteracted the baneful influence of cities, it set a premium on the domestic affections. Besides, as the Prince de Ligne remarked, it was obviously impossible for Satan to find mischief for the hands now busily engaged in planting a shady grove or directing the course of a stream. Hence came that mania for moral inscriptions for tombs of great men, for temples to Virtue, or Friendship, or the Philosophic Dead, of which Bernardin’s *Etudes de la Nature* form perhaps the most striking monument. M. Texte may well make fun of “ces parcs étranges où, aux larges allées de Versailles, se substituaient les chemins contournés, les colimaçons et les labyrinthes; où les statues antiques étaient remplacées par des grottes, des ermitages, et des tombeaux; où un castel heurtait un temple hindou et une chaumière russe

¹ *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, iv. 11.

un chalet suisse et où l'urne de Pétrarque voisinait avec le tombeau du capitaine Cook."¹

English travellers were amazed at the parodies which they were shown in all good faith. That the description just quoted is not exaggerated is proved by two letters of Horace Walpole on the subject of an English garden perpetrated at vast expense by one M. Boutin, apparently an original mixture of Fouquet and M. Jourdain. The lord of Strawberry Hill might have had the grace to remember his own lath-and-plaster Gothic battlements; the substantial mote in his neighbour's eye was, however, a more attractive theme. He sends Lady Orrery a plan of the garden, "but indeed," he adds, "without being on the spot there is no judging of the effect. There is something so sociable in being able to shake hands across the river from the tops of the two mountains 9.9., that nothing but so amiable a nation could have imagined it. Nay, it is a great idea; one thinks one sees the mountain-gods of Parnassus and Ida pulling their *fauteuils* across a continent and drinking a glass of helicon to the health of their *bergères*." Then comes the plan, with the following table of references: "1. Slip of corn. 2. Do. of grass. 3. Do. of weeds, very rural. 4. Do. of oats. 5. Irregular grove. 6. A well and pump that furnishes the river. 7.7.7. A serpentine river in a stone channel, four feet wide. 8. A canal. 9.9. Two mountains, twelve feet high, in the shape of a tansy-pudding, but not so green as the river. 10. Mount Olympus with a temple on it. 11. An irregular piece of turf. 12. A fairy, with an Italian front. 13. Slips of grass. 14.14. The wall. 15. Terrace commanding a superb view over the hot-houses and dunghill. 16. Kitchen garden with melon frames. 17. French garden."²

¹ *Rousseau et le Cosmopolitisme*, p. 356.

² Letter of August 11, 1771.

After this one quite agrees that the garden had to be seen to be believed !

All this, as we have said, is mere froth on the surface of the stream, yet it shows plainly enough in what direction the current was tending. Here the influence of Rousseau is of paramount importance: the beauty of his descriptions was equalled only by their immense popularity. It was he who educated the French public up to an appreciation of English Nature poetry, especially that of Thomson; of the poetry of melancholy, as represented by Young and Gray; of Ossian's mournful chants of the dim, heroic past.

Thomson in particular enjoyed an extraordinary reputation, though it was not established till some thirty years after the appearance of the *Seasons* in England. In 1759, Mme. Bontemps published a translation which she declared was absolutely literal, retaining the exaggerated and even disgusting images of the uncultured original. For a short time these images seem to have given the critics pause; then there was an almost universal chorus of approval, which did not, however, apply to the painter of a northern gale, who was regarded as a rather hysterical and *romanesque* individual, nor to the poet of the farmyard and the village, who was, of course, considered decidedly low. It was, above all, his episodes which were admired and imitated, with the excellent intentions thus stated by Saint-Lambert:

“ Il faut faire pour la nature physique ce qu'Homère, le Tasse, nos poètes dramatiques ont fait pour la nature morale; il faut l'agrandir, l'embellir, la rendre intéressante.”

A study of Saint-Lambert's *Saisons* is particularly useful as giving an instance of the way in which Thomson's

French disciples, Roucher, Bernis, and Delille, as well as the arch-imitator himself, regarded their model. An edition of 1777 begins as it means to go on, with the epigraph from Wieland: "May my songs give delight to the man who loves virtue and the countryside, and remind him sometimes of his duties and his pleasures." The poet's aim is far loftier than that of the ancients. "They sang the country; *we* sing of Nature," he complacently remarks. His task has been more difficult—and hence, of course, his art has been greater—than that of his English master. Thomson sees only the grandeur and the sublimity of Nature; but it is far simpler to paint grand objects than to ennoble little ones, as he (Saint-Lambert) has found to his sorrow. Besides, "Thomson n'étoit pas obligé de ramener souvent son Lecteur au but moral que je me suis proposé; il chantoit la nature chez un peuple qui la connoît et qui l'aime, et je l'ai chantée chez une nation qui l'ignore ou la regarde avec indifférence." He has therefore been forced to adopt special means to make his work attractive: he employs contrasts—a fierce battle in a smiling spring landscape, a storm in harvest; he "gives pictures rather than mere descriptions"; he ignores vulgar details in rendering the majestic whole—the jay and the magpie do not disturb "les concerts agréables du printemps," nor the coarse quarrels of boors the pleasures of the harvest home.

Above all, says this new *Art Poétique*, "vous rendrez la nature intéressante, si vous la peignez dans ses rapports avec les êtres sensibles . . . si dans vos descriptions vous répandez quelques vérités de physique et de morale, quelques idées qui éclairent les hommes, des principes d'économie, des sentiments honnêtes." But these "sentiments honnêtes" are not enough, even when reinforced by "des maximes vertueuses"; the whole work must have a

definitely moral aim. The poet, however, knows his public, which is ready to absorb virtuous maxims by the dozen, but only on the proviso that they shall be accompanied by stories of the kind politely described as "piquant"; and he is careful to conceal his moral aim so completely that one has to take his word for its existence. He imitates the episodes which Thomson had inserted in his work in deference to public opinion. The tale of *Damon and Musidora* in *Summer* becomes *Damon et Lise*, a *conte* in verse which exactly reflects the spirit of the age. But Thomson had written only three episodes; Saint-Lambert, in the interests of symmetry, produces four, all equally frigid and pointless, all equally full of sentiment and sensuality and humanitarianism. He ingeniously devises yet another source of interest. The poet is accompanied in his survey of Nature by one Doris, "aimable et tendre amie"—epithets which her painstaking efforts at polite enthusiasm seem fairly to have earned for her.

His contemporaries did not attempt to imitate her example. The number of editions into which the poem ran shows that it was at all events widely read, but it was also bitterly criticised. Voltaire's opinion was indeed favourable: "Il me paraît non seulement plus agréable, mais plus utile (que Thomson). L'Anglais décrit les saisons, et le Français dit ce qu'il faut faire dans chacune d'elles"¹—a verdict which corresponds with his remarks on Thomson in a letter to Lord Lyttelton: "j was acquainted with the author when j stayed in England. j discovered in him a great genius and a great simplicity; j lik'd in him the poet and the true philosopher, j mean the lover of mankind."²

Buffon remarked, however, in appropriately zoological

¹ *Lettre à Dupont*, quoted by Texte, *op. cit.*, p. 361, note.

² Quoted by Ballantyne: *Voltaire's Visit to England*, pp. 99-101.

terms, that "Saint-Lambert n'est qu'une froide grenouille, Delille un hanneton, Roucher un oiseau de nuit."¹ Mme. du Deffand thought that *Les Saisons* contained rather too much gold and purple and azure, vine-garlands and leafy trees, birds and streamlets and hedgerow elms—"c'est la stérilité même," she declared.² Mlle. de Lespinasse formed an exactly similar opinion of Roucher's exactly similar poem, *Les Mois*, admiring the author's talent, but wearied by his misuse of it: "Les diamants, l'or, l'arc-en-ciel, tout cela ne touche pas l'endroit sensible de mon âme."

Of the other imitators of Thomson, Delille used the *Damon and Musidora* episode in *Les Trois Règles de la Nature*—this time in a highly respectable disquisition on the uses and properties of water. In *L'Homme des Champs* he takes up Thomson's complaints on the cruelty of field sports:

"Cruels, que vous a fait l'innocente brebis. . . .
Que vous a fait l'oiseau. . . .
Que vous a fait le bœuf ?"

Roucher, too, exclaims in *Les Mois* :

"Arrête, homme vorace, arrête; ta furie
Des Tigres, des Lions, passe la barbarie."

It has been even suggested that Thomson's picture of the hunted fox, as well as Byron's reference to the dying wolf, may have inspired Vigny's *La Mort du Loup*. Chénier, too, was influenced by him, and notes in a fragment of the *Bucoliques* the following imitation taken from the harvest scene in *Autumn* :

¹ Quoted by Texte, *op. cit.*, p. 361.
² Letter to Walpole, March 12, 1769.

“ Ah ! prends un cœur humain, laboureur trop avide,
 Lorsque d'un pas tremblant l'indigence timide
 De tes larges moissons vient, le regard confus,
 Recueillir après toi les restes superflus. . . .”

Even Voltaire, who, as we have seen, esteemed Thomson the philosopher rather than Thomson the poet, was pleased to quote to Boswell a line from *Winter* on the occasion of that worthy's visit to Ferney. It may finally be noted that Mme. Necker, as was natural in the friend of so many English philosophers, brought up her daughter on Milton and Thomson, Ossian, Young and Richardson, and thus it was that Mme. de Staël was able to exclaim in later years: “ Les vers de Thomson me touchent plus que les sonnets de Pétrarque.”

In his *Préface* Saint-Lambert had declared: “ En Angleterre Thomson et Philips ont relevé la poésie champêtre; en Allemagne, MM. Haller et Gesner (*sic*) lui donnent un éclat qu'elle n'avait pas eu depuis Virgile.” To Haller, ‘ the Pope of Germany,’ as Fréron called him, belongs the distinction of being the first writer to interest France in German literature; for the efforts of the refugees and their “ *Bibliothèques germaniques*,” the influence of Grimm and Frederick the Great, had failed to weaken the prejudice expressed in the Cardinal du Perron's remark about some unlucky philosopher: “ Il a bien de l'esprit pour un Allemand.” *Die Alpen* was translated in 1729, in 1749, in 1752, after which date editions succeed one another fairly rapidly. Switzerland became the fashion; tours among the Alps were *de rigueur* with all good *septentrionalistes*; and possibly Haller's influence may have counted for something in Rousseau's choice of the scene of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.

Haller, however, did little more than prepare the way for Gessner and his kindred spirit Gellert. The latter,

whom Grimm conveniently labelled for those who wished to pretend they had read him as the "La Fontaine allemand," had a considerable vogue, but his actual influence appears to have been slight; at most he may have encouraged the general taste for sentimental morality and insipid prettiness, and his fables helped to inspire the very similar productions of Florian.

As a whole, however, to France of the eighteenth century German poetry meant only the poetry of Gessner, who happened to be a native of Zurich. The large number of translations,¹ and the numerous editions of each, are enough to show that he must rank beside the most popular of the English poets who were now influencing the direction of French literature. He was introduced to France by Huber, whom, in accordance with the fashion of the day, we will describe as the German Letourneur. Idylls, pastorals, the *Death of Abel*—all were translated and all were immediately successful. Rousseau approved strongly of Abel, who fitted in so well with his own views on the original state of humanity, and informed Huber that the poet was a man after his own heart. Even the more sophisticated Grimm declared that he knew nothing more perfect—he was cautious enough to add "of its kind." It formed the theme of dramas and operas down to 1825, and translations continued to be published until 1853.

With the appearance in 1762 of Book I. of the *Idylls*, ecstasy became delirium. Gessner, cries Berquin, is equal to Theocritus, only just inferior to Virgil, far more philosophical than Longus and Tasso. Further, as Florian points out—and the remark is significant as showing the

¹ *La Mort d'Abel*, trans. Huber and Turgot, 1761. *Idylles*, Livre 1^{er}, trans. Huber and Turgot, 1762. *Pastorales*, trans. Huber and Turgot, 1766. *Nouveaux Idylles*, trans. Meister, 1773. *Œuvres Complètes*, trans. Huber, 1768.

new tendencies of the age—"il n'a pas moins dû sa grande réputation à son amour pour la vertu qu'aux grâces de son esprit." Gessner, it is plain, is yet another of the large band of foreign writers who entered France under the ægis of Rousseau. Diderot, of course, admired and imitated him—indeed, there appeared at Zurich in 1773 a volume entitled "*Contes moraux et nouvelles idylles de D . . . et de Salomon Gessner*"; Diderot had requested the honour of being allowed to insert two short tales in the great work. Chénier's poetry contains a considerable number of reminiscences of Gessner; Bernardin de Saint-Pierre thought of him in writing his pastoral romance *Arcadie*; Chénedollé and Millevoye, two kindred spirits, were attracted by one who was akin to both: the former found in him a rare enchantment, a spring of pure and fresh poetry; the latter praised his pastoral muse and his "riante morale." The *ancien régime*, we remember, developed into an idyll before it closed in tragedy, and here the influence of Gessner is supremely important; indeed, thanks to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Millevoye, it reaches out beyond the Revolution and has some effect on the poetry of Lamartine.

The success of *Abel*, together with the *succès d'estime* of Mme. du Bocage's translation of Milton, was no doubt the chief cause of the various translations of Klopstock's *Messias*. From 1748 fragments had appeared in various journals; Turgot, who had helped Huber in the translation of Gessner, left a version of the beginning of the poem; d'Antelmy published a complete translation in 1769. The "German Milton" did not meet with the favour one would have expected; his work was considered as a mere imitation of *Paradise Lost*, more gloomy and more abstract than its supposed original. Even Delille could not acclimatise it—"c'est trop élevé pour moi."

Klopstock's sacred drama on the *Death of Adam*, which in some sort forms a pendant to his epic, was on the whole more warmly welcomed, though Fréron judiciously remarked that though it might be sacred, it was certainly not a drama. In the last decade of the century several new versions appeared; but perhaps the play's most interesting title to fame is the fact that it shared with Ossian the approval of Napoleon; he had it read to him outside the walls of Acre. In sum, however, we may say that the influence of Klopstock's work in France—of the Odes as well as of his epic and his epic drama—was slight; he was more admired than known or imitated, though he affected the development of those two Romantic characteristics, a love of the epic form and an interest in the Bible.

Next to the influence of the Nature poets must be considered that of the poets of melancholy—Young and Blair, and, to a smaller extent, Gray. A complete translation of *Night Thoughts* was published in 1769 by the indefatigable Letourneur, but before this date the public taste had been prepared by such extracts as the *Pensées anglaises sur divers sujets de religion et de morale* of 1760, and Bissy's version of *Night I.*, printed in the *Journal Etranger* in 1762. The *genre sombre* at once became wildly popular. Voltaire was ready as usual to contradict the general opinion, and wrote to Letourneur: "Il me semble que le traducteur a plus de goût que l'auteur. Vous avez mis autant d'ordre que vous avez pu dans ces ramassis de lieux communs, ampoulés et obscurs." But then Voltaire and Young were not the best of friends. They were strikingly alike in many ways: Young is said to have had the "clever, wicked look" of Voltaire; he certainly had a fair share of the Frenchman's malicious

wit, and in a discussion on Milton, during Voltaire's visit to England, succeeded in silencing his antagonist by personal epigram.

But in this matter Voltaire's following was a slight one. Richardson and Rousseau had already cultivated in their readers a taste for touching death-bed scenes; it was but a short step to acquire a liking for graves and worms and epitaphs with Young. The Cave of Melancholy, in which he worked by the light of a candle stuck in a skull, became an essential feature of every properly constructed English garden. It was the contemporary Duke of Hamilton, we are told, who advertised for a hermit to inhabit his Cave of Melancholy, one of the conditions of the appointment being that the hermit selected should not cut his hair oftener than once a year: no doubt his example was imitated on the other side of the Channel. Young was compared to Æschylus, and exalted far above the too cheerful Homer. A sudden epidemic of suicides was traced with justice to his influence. Baculard d'Arnaud put *Night Thoughts* on the same level as the *Inferno* and *Paradise Lost*. Diderot proclaimed his unlimited admiration; Grimm toiled, panting and reluctant, in Diderot's train. Chateaubriand was profoundly affected by the work, which, he declared, had founded "descriptive elegiac" poetry—a work which left behind it a silent plaint in the soul; while as late as 1800 Mme. de Staël discovered in it "des réflexions profondes et terribles."

It was only through the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* that Gray was at all well known in France. The *Gazette Littéraire* gave a translation of it in 1765, and it was much imitated by minor poets until Chateaubriand produced the definitive version beginning:

"Dans les airs frémissants j'entends le long murmure
De la cloche du soir qui tinte avec lenteur."

The *Emigrés* as a whole seem to have preferred the *Elegy* to *Night Thoughts*, but it was chiefly by the indirect influence he exerted through Chateaubriand, who called him the founder of "cette école des poètes mélancoliques," that Gray was connected, however slightly, with the "école des poètes désespérés" of Romantic days.

It is surprising that Gray's "Runic" poems should have had no influence in France in this century, when the Ossianic works of Macpherson were far more popular there than in Great Britain. To the notes of nature and melancholy was now added the note of lamentation over the heroic past. At first, indeed, it seemed as if the spirit of Voltaire would prevail, and that Ossian would be branded as neither Oriental nor Homeric nor Hebraic, but as merely turgid and rhetorical. The *Journal Encyclopédique* declared in January, 1762, that "tout son mérite consiste à peu près dans son antiquité. Une traduction française de cet ouvrage serait certainement insupportable"—a judgment the severity of which is possibly to be explained by the fact that in September 1760, the rival *Journal Etranger* had given a translation of some of the "Erse" fragments, contributed by no less a man than Turgot. Translation followed translation, however, and if none were excellent, none can have been "insupportable," for the public continually asked for more, until in 1777 Ossian received the *imprimatur* of the great Letourneur himself.

The charm of Ossian lay in his melancholy. French readers cared as little as Horace Walpole to know "in how many ways a warrior can resemble the moon or the sun or a lion or the ocean." What attracted them was the spectacle of the ruins of time—the crumbling walls of old castles, the graves of the bards, Ossian, sightless and old,

the last of his race. They delighted to be told that "we shall pass away like a dream. No sound will remain in our fields of war. Our tombs will be lost in the heath; the hunter shall not know the place of our rest." They admired, too, the landscapes, painted in simple colours with swift, decided strokes, or else vague and veiled in mist—the blue sky, the green fields, the brown rocks, the bright streams, the yellow-haired sun, the "blast that roars lonely on a sea-surrounded rock, after the winds are laid."

Ossian was admired and imitated from the first, but it was during the Revolution and the Empire that his influence was greatest, and that every writer of note attempted, in Scott's phrase, to mount the fatal and easily recognised car of the son of Fingal. In 1793, Chateaubriand, exiled in England and already a great admirer of the "barde écossais," set himself to translate some Ossianic fragments unknown in France, as well as some pieces in the same vein by a certain John Smith. During his wanderings in America he had already compared himself to Ossian, sole survivor of the ruin of his house; he thought of him in writing the wanderings of René, in telling of the flight of the Natchez before the invading whites, bearing with them the bones of their ancestors. Soon he came to discredit the authenticity of the poems, yet he still listened to "the voice of the bard, monotonous indeed, but sweet and plaintive," which had "added to the song of the Muses a note hitherto unknown."

Napoleon, who despised the works of Rousseau and the sentimentalists—they were more congenial to his brother Joseph, he said—was an enthusiastic admirer of Ossian. Arnault won his favour by his tragedy of *Oscar, Fils d'Ossian*, produced in 1796. Baour-Lormian, whom candid friends called "le barde . . . de Toulouse," was

commissioned by him to make a new translation, with appropriate additions, for the use of the imperial armies. Artists and musicians produced paintings and operas by the dozen in accordance with the Emperor's predilections: *ossianique* was the most superlative praise he could bestow.

Even Mme. de Staël was drawn for a moment to Napoleon by their common love of Ossian. To her he was, of course, the founder and representative of the Romantic literature of the North, to be opposed to Homer, the father of Classical poetry. In him was to be seen that melancholy which characterised the poetry of the old Germanic races. "L'ébranlement que les chants ossianiques causent à l'imagination, dispose aux méditations les plus profondes." For, typically enough, she made the Celts into Teutons, and spoke of Ossian as an early incarnation of the Protestant spirit. At any rate she erred in good company: did not Dr. Johnson himself proclaim to the respectful Club that the Irish language "may have been radically Teutonick"?

She and Chateaubriand, then, did much to strengthen the vogue of Ossian in France; the influence of Goethe, like that of Byron, acted in the same direction. This is hardly the place in which to treat of the fortunes of Ossian in Germany; it is, however, impossible to leave the subject without a passing reference, if only on account of the influence of Ossian on *Werther*, and of *Werther* on *Obermann*, *René*, *Adolphe*, *Delphine*, *Indiana*, *Valérie*—in fact, on the countless army of Romantic or semi-Romantic heroes and heroines. With Shakespeare, Goethe is perhaps the foreign writer who most deeply affected Romanticism in France, yet until *De l'Allemagne* appeared he was known there only as the author of a novel which was popularly regarded as an imitation of *La Nouvelle*

Héloïse. A translation appeared in 1774—the same date as the original itself; there were two in 1776, one in 1777, and after that it becomes as difficult as wearisome to keep count of them. There were also adaptations, sequels, imitations, versions operatic, tragic, ‘dramatic’ in the narrow sense; the novel even achieved the distinction of a parody. Werther’s blue coat supplanted the *redingote* and hunting-cap which were supposed to be the usual attire of British merchants and philosophers; ladies now braided their hair *à la Charlotte* instead of making it tower aloft in a structure entitled “l’union de la France et de l’Angleterre.” This vogue lasted throughout the Revolution; *Werther* even formed part of the select library taken by Napoleon on his Egyptian expedition. *De l’Allemagne* and *Lara* gave it a new lease of life, and imitations, acknowledged or otherwise, continued to appear in both novel and drama at least as late as 1846.

It was the moral and pathetic side of *Werther* which naturally appealed to the admirers of Richardson and Young—its youthful optimism and *naïveté* said nothing to them—and thus it is that from its hero descend “tous les chimériques et tous les désenchantés d’un demi-siècle.” He represents the vague aspirations of the age, its seekings, whether feverish or despairing, after an unknown and unattainable ideal; by a slight misconception he is made to represent, too, that more selfish individualism of which *René* is a better type. *Obermann* has been aptly described as a metaphysical treatise with *Werther*—an older and less idealistic *Werther*—as its subject; Adolphe, again, is *Werther* more *blasé* and more materialistic still—a gulf separates the two characters, yet the resemblance is undoubted. Finally, by 1830, *Wertherism* becomes confused with *Byronism*, and from that confusion spring those complete Romantic types, *Lélia*

and Rolla, Chatterton and Didier, exalted and unconventional souls for whom the times are out of joint, and whose only resource is to disappear from the world in which they are as strangers from another sphere.

The close connection between Ossian and *Werther* was recognised by all those who underwent their dual influence. Chateaubriand, not prone to exaggerate his literary debts, admitted, nevertheless, that in his youth *Werther*, Ossian, and the *Rêveries* of Rousseau "ont pu s'apparenter à (ses) rêves." Sénancour was influenced, not only by Goethe, but by Ossian, who strengthened his taste for vague, melancholy broodings over the past, and his love of the equally vague and gloomy landscapes of the Alps. Georges Sand and Hugo; Quinet, the most "Teutonised" of all the generation of 1830; Nodier, who imitated *Werther* in *Le Peintre de Salzbourg*—all were charmed, too, by the poetry of the North; but perhaps the most eloquent testimony to its effect is that given by Lamartine, yet another admirer of Goethe:

"Ossian fut l'Homère de mes premières années; je lui dois une partie de la mélancolie de mes pinceaux. C'est la tristesse de l'Océan. Je n'essayai que très rarement de l'imiter; mais je m'en assimilai involontairement le vague, la rêverie, l'anéantissement dans la contemplation, le regard fixé sur des apparitions confuses dans le lointain. C'était pour moi une mer après le naufrage, sur laquelle flottent, à la lueur de la lune, quelques débris; où l'on entrevoit quelques figures de jeunes filles élevant leurs bras blancs, déroulant leurs cheveux humides sur l'écume des vagues; où l'on distingue des voix plaintives entrecoupées du mugissement des flots contre l'écueil."¹

¹ *Préface des Premières Méditations.*

CHAPTER IV

GERMS OF ROMANTICISM IN NOVEL AND DRAMA

WE have seen that in that "invasion of the Barbarians" for which Rousseau had opened the way, German poetry played almost as important a part as English; but when we come to consider the novel and, to a less degree, the drama, we find that English authors alone provide the model which their French brethren almost slavishly copy. From the middle of the seventeenth century to the close of the eighteenth, when political events put an end to this pleasant commerce, there was a constant interplay of influences, and if at first the balance was decidedly in favour of France, later on her debit account assumed alarming proportions. Gray, indeed, could write that his ideal of earthly bliss was a life spent in the reading of the novels of Marivaux and Crébillon *filz*; yet in 1755, while he was no doubt indulging in this rather unexpected form of amusement, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, confirmed cosmopolitan as she was, was sending from Rome for whole boxes of English novels—no French subtleties and vanities for her!

For the French novel, by about 1740, had become somewhat devitalised and over-delicate, and that in spite of the vivifying influence of Lesage. It suffered, too, from a lack of prestige. Never up to this time had it been considered one of the great literary *genres*, and the *Art Poétique* passed it over without even the mention

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accorded to a sub-species. The recreation of the great lady in her drawing-room, of the comfortable *bourgeois* who consoled himself with picaresque romances for the dull respectability of Parisian life, it was always regarded simply as an amusement, to be classed with gaming and dancing and theatre-going among the commonplace amenities of existence. Like the mediæval literature out of which it had developed, its evolution had followed two well-marked lines. On the one hand we have the aristocratic descendants of the French epics and the Breton romances—the *romans à longue haleine*—Amadis and his progeny, the works of Mlle. de Scudéry and La Calprenède, refined and condensed in Mme. de La Fayette's *Zaïde*, linked in her *Princesse de Clèves* with the psychological finesse and the classic proportions hitherto seen only in tragedy. Bourgeois literature, on the other hand, has its modern equivalents of the *Roman de Renard* and the *fabliaux*: *Francion* and the *Roman bourgeois* bear exactly the same relation to the *Grand Cyrus* as does the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* to the *Chanson de Roland*. The type of which these two novels are early instances had better fortunes in Spain, and the picaresque romance, from the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1553) onwards, gained a European vogue, until it found in France its highest expression in Lesage's *Gil Blas*.

As a whole, and in spite of the great popularity which is proved by the large number of inferior romances it inspired, *Gil Blas* exerted comparatively little influence on the development of the French novel proper. The national bias in favour of logical construction, of psychological analysis, and internal rather than external realism, was too strong for Lesage, and later on resulted in the cold welcome that was given to Fielding and Smollett even when anglomania was at its height. Up to the time of Richard-

son, Marivaux sets the tone, and when his popularity wanes his place is taken by a psychologist of his own type. For, though he adopts on a smaller scale the framework of Lesage—*La Vie de Marianne* and *Le Paysan parvenu* are each a "Progress" in the Hogarthian sense—yet the actual events that happen to his heroes are the least important part of their story: what matters is the unfolding of their character, and the way in which their natural temperament reacts on and finally overcomes external circumstances.

Marivaux himself was strongly affected by English influences, particularly that of "le sage M. Addison" and "le vertueux M. Steele." The two English essayists were quite as popular in France and Germany as in their own land, and as early as 1716 the Coverley portraits were declared by the *Journal de Trévoux* to surpass La Bruyère. Their healthy bourgeois morality, their genuine interest in the everyday trifles that make up the average life, the Gallic ease and clearness of their style—these were the qualities which won for the *Spectator* papers the praise of Voltaire, of Prévost, of Rousseau, and evoked the sincerest form of flattery in Marivaux (*Le Spectateur français*) and, so the envious said, in Montesquieu (*Lettres persanes*). In his two novels, also, Marivaux succeeds in conveying something of the atmosphere of the *Spectator*: there are the same middle-class surroundings; the same characters, neither great nor mean, but just ordinary people with ordinary ambitions; the same delicate touch, which can gloss over, without concealing, the unpleasant side of life, and treat its absurdities with sympathetic amusement.

And the circle is completed. Marivaux in his turn influences English writers, who again react on the compatriots of Marivaux. In spite of the similarity of their genius and the resemblances between their works, it is

more than doubtful whether there was any direct connection between Marivaux and Richardson, and MM. Texte and Jusserand both answer the vexed question in the negative. But Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, like Jacob in *Le Paysan parvenu*, is a countryman turned footman, and—at least ostensibly—a simple and magnanimous soul whose virtues are rewarded with the hand of his wealthy patroness. It is interesting to note that, largely owing to the differences in the style, the theme which in Marivaux the French public found trivial and insipid, was considered coarse and “*brutal*” in Fielding. Sterne, too, was a faithful reader of Marivaux, and the sentimental casuistry of the too ingenious Marianne furnished him with many a quibble for the *Sentimental Journey*, the vogue of which in France exceeded all bounds.

Richardson, we have said, was very probably unacquainted with the works of Marivaux till *Pamela* and perhaps *Clarissa* also had been written. The fact that their contemporaries, both French and English, were certain of the contrary merely suggests, by emphasising the similarity between them, one of the reasons for the warm welcome which awaited Richardson in France. His advent had been prepared by Marivaux—“the poor original of a marvellous copy,” as Grimm unthankfully called him. Diderot, as was to be expected from the most alert and receptive intellect of his age, was not only strongly affected by Richardson, but was one of the chief agents in spreading his fame in France. For days after he had read *Pamela* he wandered vaguely about with tearful and distracted mien, and could only sob, “Oh, mes amis, Pamela!” in answer to the most ordinary remarks. When *Clarissa* appeared he sobbed even more copiously; it is not recorded what happened when he perused *Sir Charles Grandison*. His

admiration for the "man of feeling" *par excellence*, the Homer of his day, was expressed partly by imitation—for the theme of *La Religieuse* has something in common with that of *Clarissa*—partly in the *Eloge* which he wrote on his idol's death:

"Oh Richardson, Richardson, homme unique à mes yeux, tu seras ma lecture dans tous les temps ! Forcé par des besoins pressants, je vendrai mes livres : mais tu me resteras ; tu me resteras sur le même rayon avec Moïse, Homère, Euripide et Sophocle."

One is reminded irresistibly of Porson's epigram : " *Madoc* will be read—when Homer and Virgil are forgotten."

Diderot was, of course, able to read Richardson in the original, but the greater number of his contemporaries, Rousseau among them, were dependent on the good offices of that ubiquitous figure in eighteenth-century literature—the translator. Richardson was—as things went—particularly fortunate in this respect. Laplace and Desfontaines produced merely a travesty of Fielding's works, and the humour of Sterne, recondite as it often was, disappeared completely under the heavy hand of Frénais ; but Prévost was a translator born, and the one Frenchman fitted by career and temperament to translate the particular works he undertook. Thanks to his two sojourns in England (1728-1731 and 1733), he had a thorough insight into social conditions ; like Richardson, he revelled in psychological analysis ; his novels, too, were seasoned with moralisings and overcast with gravity or even downright gloom. So it was that his own works won him less glory than his translations of the greater though similar works of a kindred spirit ; and the appearances in their French form of *Pamela* (1742), of *Clarissa* (1751), of *Grandison* (1758), were greeted with far more

enthusiasm than was that of *Clèveland* or the *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*. Prévost's translations, we have said, were good—excellent, even—in comparison with the average translation of the time; yet, considered absolutely, they leave much to be desired. They are liberal in their omissions, sometimes for the sake of brevity, oftener because of the timidity of their author, unwilling to shock readers whose sensibilities were as tender on some points as they were remarkably impervious on others. Much of the moralising disappears; scenes that are too vulgar share the fate of scenes that are too harrowing; Richardson's prolix and pedestrian style becomes in Prévost's skilful hands something far more elegant and flowery. Yet the basis of the novels remains the same: neither the pathos nor the elaborate psychology undergoes any alteration, and these, after all, are the essential features of Richardson's genius.

The two men who did most to diffuse a knowledge of Richardson in France were thus two of the most intimate friends of Rousseau. When the latter first came to Paris in 1741, Diderot became at once his literary counsellor and his personal friend, a dual rôle he was destined to fill for at least the next sixteen years. Rousseau first knew Prévost ten years later, just when the translation of *Clarissa* was well under way. It was natural, then, that he should have been interested from the beginning in the literary idol of his two friends: closer acquaintance turned interest into admiration, and admiration bore fruit in a desire to imitate. As soon as the *Nouvelle Héloïse* appeared, critics on both sides of the Channel compared it with *Clarissa*, generally to the advantage of the latter. Rousseau, according to the common opinion, was a great stylist, even a poet—not that that was much of a recommendation in the eighteenth century—but Richardson was an

expert psychologist with sublime moral tendencies: the verdict in favour of the Englishman was then a foregone conclusion. To the end of his life Rousseau was honest enough to speak admiringly of Richardson, yet he would not have been human had he not felt and expressed considerable irritation at these invidious comparisons; and throughout the *Confessions* it is his constant preoccupation to prove that *Julie* and *Clarissa* have little in common as regards their plot and nothing as regards the merits of their execution.

Yet, as usual, hard facts give the lie to Rousseau's sincere but inaccurate protestations, and the resemblances between the two works leap at once to the eye. By laying his scene in the territories of the Protestant, semi-pastoral State of Geneva, he has succeeded in flattering contemporary feeling by giving a decidedly English turn to the manners, the surroundings, and the temperament of his characters. Julie's Elysée, Julie's *matinée à l'anglaise*, the Britannic thoroughness of Julie's household management—all are described at great length; the most "sympathetic" personage in the book is the noble and eccentric Lord Edward Bomston, evidently drawn *con amore*. The plot of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* has much in common with that of *Clarissa*. There is the same striking symmetry in the grouping of the characters: Julie and Claire correspond to the grave *Clarissa* and the flip-pant Miss Howe, the Baron d'Etanges to the harsh and inconsiderate Harlowe family, Bomston to Colonel Morden, while Saint-Preux and Wolmar both have something in common with Lovelace. In the use of the epistolary style, in the interest in ordinary middle-class life, and in the realism which strives to paint it exactly, the same similarity exists. Both authors have a strong religious bent; both are moralists and moralisers, Protes-

tants and preachers; both, in opposition to the tendencies of their time, proclaim the importance of righteousness and the sanctity of the family.

But, as M. Texte has acutely pointed out, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* consists of two books in one: a didactic and realistic novel side by side with a lyrical poem of passion and Nature. The former gives the measure of Rousseau's debt to Richardson, the latter his original contribution to the development of the novel. It was the Richardsonian part which on the whole made the popularity of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* during its author's lifetime; it was the lyrical part which insured its influence on the Romantics, and thereby perpetuated the influence of Richardson as well.

During the eighteenth century an admiration for the English writer was naturally proclaimed by those who wished to annoy his French rival. Even Voltaire imitated *Pamela* in *Nanine*, though the latter philosophises with a freedom that would have shocked the aggressively unsophisticated heroine of Richardson; and Rousseau thought, probably without justification, that Diderot's *Eloge de Richardson* was a back-handed blow at himself. But with the Romantics, to admire the one novelist was necessarily to admire the other. Chénier, standing barely on the threshold of the new era, wrote enthusiastically of "Clarisse, beauté sainte où respire le ciel," and "Clémentine adorée, âme céleste et pure." Mme. de Staël read Richardson with her father, and later on admitted: "L'enlèvement de Clarisse a été un des événements de ma jeunesse." Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, Ballanche, Nodier, Sainte-Beuve, Lamartine, George Sand, Musset, all knew and loved what they regarded as works of genius, as the finest novels in the world. Mme. de Staël and George Sand are perhaps

the most direct heirs of the Rousseau-Richardson tradition. The former adds a further intellectual element to what was already a didactic *genre*; the latter, working in quite another direction, follows Rousseau especially on his subjective and lyrical side—*Jacques*, for example, may be regarded as *La Nouvelle Héloïse* without its Richardsonian elements.

Of the other English novelists, Rousseau was most attracted by Defoe. The account of Saint-Preux's two sojourns on a desert island, his own instinctive flight to the Ile de Saint-Pierre in 1762, seem to have been inspired by the example of that very different solitary, Alexander Selkirk. Emile, in Rousseau's plan of an ideal education, was to be deprived of the pernicious literature which corrupted the minds of most young children—Molière and La Fontaine to wit—and to be brought up on *Robinson Crusoe* alone—*Robinson*, "le plus heureux traité de philosophie naturelle," the work of a greater thinker than Buffon or Pliny or even Aristotle.

Far greater than the popularity of Defoe in France, however, was that of a later writer whose work Rousseau does not seem to have known, but whose vogue he certainly prepared. If the middle of the eighteenth century is sacred to the glory of Rousseau, the last thirty years are as full of the glory of Sterne. "Le second Rabelais de l'Angleterre," as Voltaire called him, lived in Paris from 1760 to 1763, and shared with Hume the incense of all the philosophic drawing-rooms of the day. He frequented most the circle of d'Holbach, which admired equally in him the philosopher, the buffoon, and the hapless adorer of Eliza Draper—for it is perhaps unnecessary to add that he made as much literary capital out of his sentimental adventures as ever Rousseau had done.

Diderot saluted in Sterne a kindred spirit, and was

particularly charmed with the hourly eccentricities by which he insured his hold on the public. Like Sterne, he was a man of feverish disposition, always gesticulating, never still; and, like the Englishman, he succeeded in imparting to his works an atmosphere of restless activity. He was the first among French novelists, as Sterne had been the first among English, to realise how small a part the spoken word plays in ordinary intercourse. Irritating as they sometimes are to read, his conversations, consisting of half-finished sentences and tentative monosyllables, garnished with dots and dashes and eked out by copious details as to gesture and intonation, are far more expressive and true to life than the unfailing flow of logical propositions which represented his contemporaries' idea of everyday speech. As might be expected, Sterne exerted a strong influence on Diderot's style in other directions, and certainly did nothing to improve it. Diderot had by nature even smaller powers of sustained composition than most of the writers of his analytic age; like Mme. de Staël, he suffered as a writer from his versatility and brilliance in conversation. The example of Sterne's work, with its irrelevance and incoherence, flattered and strengthened his natural tendencies. Sterne taught him that it was unnecessary to take pains, since to him who sentimentalises all artistic defects shall be forgiven; and it was because he would not realise that in literature, as elsewhere, one cannot get something for nothing, that his work did not endure.

Apart from the inconclusive resemblances between Yorick and the nephew of Rameau, there is in Diderot's writings at least one very striking instance of more definite influence: he paid Sterne the characteristic compliment of borrowing word for word from *Tristram Shandy* the opening passage of *Jacques le Fataliste*, and the whole of

the slight story which forms the framework of that Shandean medley is very similar to the tale of Corporal Trim's adventures. In spite of Diderot's example and precept, however, *Tristram Shandy* never became really popular in France: it was regarded with some amazement and the perfunctory respect due to what must, after all, be a masterpiece, though it might seem at first sight an annoying and nonsensical hotch-potch. But, on the other hand, the already emotional French public took the *Sentimental Journey* and the *Letters to Eliza* to its overworked heart. The *Journey* ran into nearly seventy editions. Eliza was enthroned beside Julie, Clarissa, and Clementina in the temple of ill-starred and interesting heroines.

Great was the competition for the honour of being Sterne's translator; on the whole, Frénais succeeded in appropriating him most completely, publishing in 1769 a *Voyage sentimental*, and in 1776 the *Letters to Eliza* and the first half of *Tristram Shandy*. De la Baume, however, ran him close, with the rest of *Tristram Shandy* in 1785, the *Sermons of Yorick* in 1786, and some letters in 1788. Imitators appeared by the dozen, the most illustrious among them being Mlle. de Lespinasse, who "adored" Sterne and did much to insure his social success in Paris. Voltaire, Diderot, and d'Holbach vied with each other in extravagant adulation; Garat preferred the English philosopher—for by the credulous he was regarded as such, albeit a philosopher in motley—to Rabelais and Swift; Suard spoke of his "immortal flame of genius," his "celestial accents," and at last definitely "placed" him by comparing him with the Bible.

During the Revolution and in the succeeding years up to 1830 Sterne was as much read as ever, but cases of direct influence become few and far between. In 1794

appeared the two most exquisite imitations of the *Sentimental Journey* ever written, the *Voyage autour de ma chambre* and *Expédition nocturne autour de ma chambre* of Xavier de Maistre. One is obliged to call them imitations because in form—or lack of it—and tone they bear decided resemblances to Sterne's work; like it, they are whimsical and sentimental, discursive and subjective. Yet they are Sterne with a difference: de Maistre's style is the refined essence of Sterne's, marked by the same mannerisms, yet modified by the French qualities of delicacy and *mesure*. The personalities of the two authors are quite different also. There is something of the showman about Sterne—he is always playing to the gallery, trying to make his audience weep where it had never wept before; de Maistre is perfectly sincere and self-controlled—his gaiety never degenerates into buffoonery, and his melancholy is never maudlin.

Among the Romantic writers traces of direct imitation have been found in Nodier's *Histoire du Roi de Bohême et de ses sept châteaux*, Hugo's *Bug Jargal*, and Gautier's *Fortunio*. As a whole, however, the influence of Sterne merely went to strengthen that of Rousseau: it brought no new element into French literature but rather exaggerated tendencies which already existed. Sterne popularised still further that *étalage du moi* which forms so prominent a feature in Romantic literature from Chateaubriand to Musset; and, tearing aside the outer wrappings of reason and self-control, he revealed man as that creature of instinct, the sport of destiny, tossed by indecision and racked by doubt, who was to become the Romantic hero.

The history of the drama in the eighteenth century is by no means as important as that of the novel from the point of view of Romanticism. The novel was a new *genre*, unfet

tered by tradition, free to develop along any lines and to any extent; but the yoke of Racine and Molière pressed heavily on would-be reformers of the stage. Such efforts as are made are largely superficial, and tend chiefly to the development of greater external realism; in fact, the current sets strongly towards the local colour of the Romantics. Reform follows two main lines, and in each case England does much to determine their direction. On the one hand we have the imitation of Shakespeare, which leads directly to Romantic drama; on the other, imitation of the *bourgeois* dramatists Moore and Lillo, which has practically no influence on the Romantics—for the theories of Diderot were unknown to them—but strongly affects the problem-play of Augier and Dumas *frs.*

The popularity of Shakespeare in France was due in the first instance to Voltaire, who, with his usual love of novelty and his passion for being in a minority of one, wrote admiringly in the *Lettres anglaises* of the dramatist, who was at the time practically unknown in France—for a mention in Clément's catalogue (1675-1684) of the library of Louis XIV., another in that of the library of Fouquet, a passing reference in Baillet's *Jugement des Savants* of 1685-86, do not exactly constitute fame. Voltaire, however, during his visit to England, came to know Shakespeare through his friends Bolingbroke, Falkener, and Pope. He was present at a performance of *Julius Cæsar*, and was moved by it in spite of all its "barbarous irregularities." He admired in its author "un génie plein de force et de fécondité," but was shocked by his lack of good taste and his ignorance of the rules. On the whole, however, he decided in his favour, and expressed his opinion in a simile which Hugo was later to expand:

"Le génie poétique des Anglais ressemble jusqu'à présent à un arbre touffu planté par la nature, jetant au

hasard mille rameaux et croissant inégalement avec force. Il meurt si vous voulez forcer sa nature et le tailler en arbre des jardins de Marly."

It was not to be expected that Voltaire should admire without imitating. Yet with regard to the theatre, as well as in politics, he was a Conservative at heart, even if at first sight he might appear the most rabid of demagogues. His innovations, therefore, though at the time they caused much fluttering in Classical dovecotes, were really insignificant; he attacked the externals of Classical tragedy, yet in essentials he left it unchanged. The Unities remain sacred for him; so does the Alexandrine; prose is anathema, and as to blank verse—"les vers blancs ne coûtent que la peine de les dicter. Cela n'est pas plus difficile à faire qu'une lettre." He respects the proprieties; Marianne, César, Eriphyle, Zaïre, obedient in death as in life to the laws of etiquette, expire in the wings, though out of consideration for the curiosity of the spectators they expire audibly and with explanatory comments.

Voltaire's reforms, then, are limited to the *mise-en-scène*, and so far as they go certainly contribute to the development of the dramatic theory of the Romantics. Subjects are no longer drawn exclusively from the Classics: *Zaïre* deals with the Crusades, *Tancrède* with the Normans in Sicily, *Adèle du Guesclin* with France of the late Middle Ages. With *L'Orphelin de la Chine* and *Alzire* he ranges in true Johnsonian fashion from China to Peru. And he does more than merely give exotic names to Classical tragedies of the hackneyed type—unlike one Briffaut, author of a "Spanish" drama, who escaped the too pressing attentions of the censor by the simple expedient of changing his scene from Barcelone to Babylone; the two names rhymed and were of the same length, so no further alterations were necessary. Voltaire, however,

aspires to correctness and detail in local colour. Lökain must appear in *L'Orphelin de la Chine* with a plumed helmet and a Tartar bow; Cassius, after assassinating Julius Cæsar in the wings, must return to the audience with his dagger dripping gore as evidence of good faith; Sémiramis must circulate as freely as the rows of spectators on the stage will let her between the hanging gardens and the tomb of Ninus. In pursuit of external realism, too, Voltaire fills his plays with action, generally of an unusual and bloodthirsty description: the final scene of *Hamlet* appears to have exercised an unholy fascination over him—at least in the opinion of those of his contemporaries whom he disgusted with his “sanglantes imitations de ce boucher de théâtre qu'on appelle Shakespeare.”

But disgust soon died away: from 1730 it had been the fashion to talk about Shakespeare; after 1745, the date of Laplace's translation, even the most squeamish began to admire him. In his introductory *Discours* Laplace well expresses the general opinion of the time, tolerant and optimistic, if not particularly well informed:

“Qui sait si nos neveux ne verront pas éclore de ce travail de nouvelles découvertes et de nouvelles propriétés qui, formant pour eux de nouveaux plaisirs, prescriront aux auteurs de nouvelles règles pour le dramatique ?”

Some thirty years later, in 1776, appeared with great pomp, adorned by a list of subscribers including half the crowned heads of Europe and all the nobility, gentry, and philosophy of France, the complete translation by the inevitable Letourneur, said to be much superior to that of Laplace. The Preface at any rate goes considerably farther than that of the earlier translator had done:

“Jamais homme de génie ne pénétra plus avant dans l'abîme du cœur humain et ne fit mieux parler aux passions

le langage de la nature. Fécond comme elle-même, il prodigua à tous ses personnages cette étonnante variété de caractères qu'elle dispense aux individus qu'elle crée. Né dans un état obscur et dans un siècle encore barbare, il n'avait devant lui que la nature. Il devina que c'était là le modèle qu'il devait peindre. . . ."

Voltaire naturally could not listen with equanimity to such unqualified praise of his former *protégé*, now become his rival. In the name of Corneille and Racine he made a more or less disinterested protest. Great was his wrath and vehement his expression of it: "Gille, dans une foire de province, s'exprimerait avec plus de décence et de noblesse que le prince Hamlet." Shakespeare is "un monstre," Letourneur "ce misérable." Voltaire's greatest regret is that "c'est moi qui, autrefois, parlai le premier de ce Shakespeare; c'est moi qui le premier montrai aux Français quelques perles dans son énorme fumier." This he declared in a letter to the Academy in 1776; in 1778, only a few months before his death, his opinion was the same—Shakespeare was a savage with sparks of genius which shone in a horrible night.

But here at least his century would not follow him. He had set the ball rolling without much difficulty, and now his greatest efforts could not stop its course. Mme. du Deffand found Shakespeare "refreshing"; the Président Hénault wrote a quite unsuccessful chronicle play on François II. in the style of "les ouvrages de Shakespeare"; Collot d'Herbois published in 1780 a comedy based on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Most important were the adaptations of Ducis,¹ the work of a sincere lover of Shakespeare, unfortunately spoiled by the timidity of taste which led him to revise and improve upon his original so frequently. Yet he did it all with the best

¹ *Hamlet*, 1769; *Roméo*, 1772; *Lear*, 1783; *Macbeth*, 1784; *Jean-sans-Terre*, 1791; *Othello*, 1792.

intentions; he was prepared to mutilate Shakespeare to any extent if only he could thereby secure him a hearing in France. *Hamlet*, with reminiscences of the *Cid*, has a happy ending; so has *Othello*, though the original remains as a variant; *Romeo and Juliet* has Dantesque amplifications. In spite of all he could do, his public still protested against the horrors of his plays; yet that did not prevent their popularity—they survived the Revolution and the Empire, and only faded into obscurity with the dawn of Romanticism.

From 1790 till about 1820 Shakespeare was chiefly known in France under the form of operas, pantomimes, and *pièces à machines*. M. Jusserand mentions “Roméo et Juliette, opéra par Ségur, musique de Steibelt”; “Hamlet, pantomime tragique en trois actes, mêlée de danses, par Louis Henry, musique de M. le Comte de Gallenberg”; “Les Visions de Macbeth ou les Sorcières d’Ecosse, mélodrame à grand spectacle”; “Le More de Venise ou Othello, pantomime entremêlée de dialogues et de danses.” Thus it was that to the generation of 1820 Shakespeare was little more than a great name, and the titles of his plays were simply pegs on which to hang entertainments, generally of a most unliterary nature. It is not surprising that in 1822, when some English actors attempted to play *Othello*—the *Othello* of Shakespeare, that is—in Paris, they were greeted with groans and rotten apples. Desdemona fainted, the police were called in to check the riot, and ultimately the quarrel was patched up by the departure of the offending troupe to a smaller theatre open only to subscribers.

Such was the end of the vogue of Shakespeare as understood by the eighteenth century; yet the work of Voltaire and Laplace, Letourneur and Ducis, was by no means without more permanent results. They did not succeed

in training their contemporaries to an intelligent appreciation of the great Elizabethan—perhaps because they did not always rise to it themselves; but they kept alive an interest in his name, and singled him out for the admiration of the Romantics, with what important results we shall see in a later chapter.

We turn now to the other branch of the English theatre which exerted an influence contemporary with that of Shakespeare. Diderot's interest in the *bourgeois* drama of Lillo and Moore, the excellent theories and lamentable practice he founded on their works, have already been described. Now the influence of Young and Richardson was added to that of Moore and Lillo: Sébastien Mercier, Baculard d'Arnaud, Saurin, Sedaine, Beaumarchais, all followed in the steps of Diderot. The *genre sérieux* enthralled audiences that had been the gayest, the most flippant, the most keenly alive to the ridiculous, in Europe; and when at last it was supplanted, its successful rival was the still gloomier *genre sombre*. And yet in the end, in spite of all their melancholy, in spite of the "Romantic" nature of some of their theories, it seems that none of the writers of *bourgeois* tragedy had any influence on the Romantics. One would have suspected that Vigny was thinking of them in writing *Chatterton*, or Dumas père in writing *Antony*; but in fact they were quite ignorant of the dramatic works of Diderot and the lesser lights, and can only have been vaguely affected by the indefinite spirit of the age which these latter had helped by their plays to produce. It was not until 1850 that the *genre sérieux* came into its own, and the ideas of Diderot were linked with the technical skill of Dumas père in the person of Dumas fils.

CHAPTER V

BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE

AMONG the individual writers who prepared the way for Romanticism, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre has an importance considerably in advance of his literary merit, as being the second of the three great pre-Romantic writers who link the eighteenth century with the nineteenth. "Rousseau—Saint-Pierre—Chateaubriand"—the names are easily repeated but, unlike many such formulæ, they really do what they claim. They represent, in fact, the three main stages of the gradually swelling current of Romanticism.

We need not say much to show that Saint-Pierre had a great deal in common with Rousseau, while the remainder of this chapter will make it abundantly clear, without undue labouring of the point, that the work of the two was by no means identical. Temperamentally and morally Bernardin resembles Jean-Jacques—they are ambitious, restless, roaming souls, feeling vaguely after ideals which they can scarcely express, egoistical and proud. Both come from eccentric families—in Saint-Pierre's blood, indeed, as in Chateaubriand's, there is insanity. There, however, the resemblance ends: for Bernardin never descended to the moral depths in which his predecessor was perfectly at home.

In ideas, too, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre draws continually upon Rousseau, with whom he was acquainted and whose works he constantly read. Both, as will be seen,

are individualists; both have the same ideas, or, rather, the same "feelings," about Nature and Religion; both are wanderers, and in their wanderings we have the germ of the Romantic cosmopolitan spirit; both, once more, are intensely emotional. It is fortunate, no doubt, that such qualities as these should be shared by two men, instead of being possessed by only one; but it is certainly both fortunate and remarkable that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, in handing on such fruitful ideas to his successors, should have possessed one great literary quality very much in excess of his master.

For Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was, first and foremost, a painter; and, in the drab eighteenth-century, a man who could bring brightly coloured images of far-off lands before the eyes of his readers was assured of a following second only to that of one who could play to perfection on the strings of the human heart.

It is not to be thought that he was a master-painter like Victor Hugo; indeed, it is so easy to analyse his procedure and to separate his pigments that we may do so at will. The first element in nearly all his pictures is colour: by some he is even denied the title of "painter" and given only that of "colourist." The scenery of *Paul et Virginie* alone, which is a mere offshoot of the larger *Etudes de la Nature*, would justify the title in its better sense. We are taken to Mauritius and set down in a plain surrounded by mountains—great brown giants, gilded at dawn by the rising sun or lit up by the reflection of a rainbow, but otherwise standing gaunt against an azure sky. The flora of this region is represented by blossoms of crimson, white, lilac or blue; the fauna by flame-coloured cardinal-birds, emerald parrots, and blue pigeons, together with monkeys distinguished by their "poil gris et verdâtre, et leur face toute noire." Some of the passages in which these

descriptions occur are rather crude in workmanship; not so the pictures of Virginie dressed in white muslin lined with rose-coloured taffetas, or in simple country costume with a crown of scarlet periwinkles on her head. Nor can we find fault with many passages in the purely descriptive though early work entitled *Voyage à l'Île de France*, portions of which illustrate more clearly than anything in the better-known *Paul et Virginie* the blaze and riot of colour with which Saint-Pierre could garnish his work.

Compare this skyscape, for example, with anything else of the kind in the eighteenth century:

“Figurez-vous à l’horizon une belle couleur orange qui se nuance de vert, et vient se perdre au zénith dans une teinte lilas, tandis que le reste du ciel est d’un magnifique azur. Les nuages qui flottent çà et là sont d’un beau gris de perle. Quelquefois ils se disposent en longues bandes cramoisies, de couleur ponceau et écarlate; toutes ces teintes sont vives, tranchées et relevées de franges d’or.”

Or this, which, though tending towards the matter-of-fact, is equally brilliant:

“Un soir les nuages se disposèrent vers l’occident sous le forme d’un vaste réseau, semblable à de la soie blanche. Lorsque le soleil vint à passer derrière, chaque maille du réseau parut relevée d’un filet d’or. L’or se changea ensuite en couleur de feu et feu ponceau, et le fond du ciel se colora de teintes légères de pourpre, de vert, et de bleu céleste.”

Here are a few touches from a scene at dawn:

“On voyait au ciel quelques nuages blancs, d’autres cuivrés. . . . L’horizon paraissait d’un rouge ardent . . . le côté de l’est était tout noir.”

Here, finally, is a passage of different nature, taken from *Arcadie*, which, let it be remembered, is a pastoral tale of the same type as *L'Astrée* :

“ Il admira d'abord comment la nature avait préservé leurs fruits (*i.e.*, of the trees) de l'attaque des oiseaux. La châtaigne, encore en lait, était couverte de cuir et d'une coque épineuse. La noix tendre était protégée par une dure coquille et par un brou amer. Les fruits mous étaient défendus avant leur maturité par leur âpreté, leur acidité ou leur verdeur. Ceux qui étaient mûrs invitaient à les cueillir. Les abricots dorés, les pêches veloutées, et les coings cotonneux, exhalaient les plus doux parfums. Les rameaux du prunier étaient couverts de fruits violets, saupoudrés de poudre blanche. Les grappes, déjà vermeilles, pendaient à la vigne : et, sur les larges feuilles du figuier, la figue entr'ouverte laissait couler son suc en gouttes de miel et de cristal.”

Another element in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's art is the multiplication of names—especially of unfamiliar, sonorous, or strange-sounding names—in his descriptions of unfamiliar countries. This is, of course, allied to his evident though undeveloped predilection for local colour and for the use of the *mot propre* (in both of which he foreshadows the Romantics), but it is not to be identified with these devices. It is partly, at least, due to the artist's instinct that the suggestiveness of such names is a more powerful aid to the imagination than even a detailed description of them. Thus we are introduced, in one place, to “badamiers,” “manguiers,” “avocats,” “goyaviers,” “jacqs,” and “jamroses”; and in another to “les papas grecs, les mollahs turcs, les verbiests arméniens, les seïdres et les cosys persans,” about whom it is safe to say that few of the readers of *Paul et Virginie* can have known more than that the first group

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is composed of names of trees, and the second of ministers of religion.

Saint-Pierre, as may be imagined, has the artist's eye for local colour, and takes care to describe with accuracy, and to describe scenes with which he is familiar. "J'ai décrit des sites réels," he says, "des mœurs dont on trouverait peut-être encore aujourd'hui des modèles dans quelques parties solitaires de l'Ile de France, ou de l'Ile de Bourbon qui en est voisine, et une catastrophe bien certaine, dont je puis produire, même à Paris, des témoignages irrécusables."¹ By his careful naming and description of plants, trees, birds and fishes, he certainly succeeds in conveying the atmosphere of the tropics. Often, too, he goes out of his way to describe manners and customs—occupations, meals, and costumes furnishing the chief examples—and employs a common artistic device (though making the mistake more than once of explaining it) in the description of events in a way foreign to the European, but perfectly natural to those of a more primitive civilisation. Thus "dinner-time" is "quand les ombres des bananiers sont à leurs pieds": time is habitually reckoned by shadows and by the fall of the leaf year by year. "Les manguiers ont donné douze fois leurs fruits, et les orangers vingt-quatre fois leurs fleurs, depuis que je suis au monde." Snow, too, is thus described as it appears to one who sees it for the first time: "Le ciel se dissout en plumes blanches comme celles des oiseaux." It is worthy of notice that the pastoral *Arcadie*, from which this last phrase is taken, is as rich in local colour as any other of the works of Saint-Pierre.

The mention of local colour leads us to the most important characteristic of the art of Saint-Pierre—its exoticism. It is one of the chief links between Rousseau and Chateau-

¹ *Préambule* to *Paul et Virginie*.

briand—and, further, one of the chief causes of Saint-Pierre's popularity. For it amounted to a form of idealism to quit the sorely tried France of those days and pass in spirit to an unexplored land full of strange new sights and sounds—an idealism reinforced by the prominence given to virtue, love, and emotion, and by constant references to the perfection of Nature. Rousseau had these last characteristics, but he kept within the confines of France and Switzerland, so little had he of Saint-Pierre's predilection for the unknown.

It was no doubt Saint-Pierre's wide reading which developed this predilection, just as it was his early travels in Mauritius which gave it definite form. He realised, too, through his reading and his travels combined, that the few writers who had essayed to describe tropical scenery brought their own insularity to bear on what they saw, and, for the most part, portrayed, not tropical scenery at all, but the tropics through European spectacles. Others, less venturesome, had contented themselves with describing their own countries. He himself is fully conscious of his rôle of innovator. "Nos poètes," he says in the Preface to *Paul et Virginie*, "ont assez reposé leurs amants sur le bord des ruisseaux, dans les prairies et sous le feuillage des hêtres. J'en ai voulu asseoir sur le rivage de la mer, au pied des rochers, à l'ombre des cocotiers, des bananiers, et des citronniers en fleurs." He had a great imaginative scheme, so he tells us in the Preface to *Arcadie*, of building a city in the midst of the vast forests of the Amazon, and gathering in it the oppressed of every nation to live on terms of mutual tolerance, each individual contributing to the common weal something peculiar to his country. Such schemes are as Utopian as the social and educational plans of Rousseau, yet the very conception is significant of a great mind. "The

world my city " might be his motto as truly as that of any of his successors; but since his cosmopolitanism is not yet fully evolved, we can hardly call it more than exoticism. He describes, it is true, the lakes and plains of Russia, its wolf-ridden forests, the mines of Siberia, the fertile fields and magnificent oaks of Poland, the birch and fir woods of Silesia. But his descriptions lack life and colour: they are too much like the observation of the Berlin astronomer, which he himself quotes to ridicule it: "Voilà de grandes plaines; on pourrait y tracer une longue base, et par ces clochers avoir une belle suite de triangles. . . ." ¹ It is far otherwise with the scenery of Mauritius. Incapable of extending his sympathies over the whole wide world, he has taken this to his heart and made it his spiritual home. Here he loses himself as an individual in colour and imagery; here he finds himself as an artist, and excels.

But, though he is mainly a painter, habitually thinking in images, and often blundering hopelessly in the realms of logic and philosophy, his ideas and sentiments merit attention, inasmuch as they commanded the attention of his successors. Let us consider his treatment of Nature, putting aside at once his ridiculous attempts at scientific reasoning and the supposed illustrations of the beneficence of Providence with which he adorns his *Etudes de la Nature*. We shall find that he has in a marked degree the *sentiment de la nature* and love of solitude of which Rousseau in France is the first eighteenth-century exponent. The works of Nature speak to his senses "in a language which neither times nor nations can alter." This language prevents us from depression. It gives us the purest pleasure, enabling us to enjoy the fresh air, the scent of flowers, the murmur of running water, and the "final harmonies"

¹ *Voyage en Silésie.*

of light and shadow. He himself is not in the least ashamed of his love for Nature's beauties: "Je préfère un cep de vigne à une colonne; et j'aimerais mieux avoir enrichi ma patrie d'une seule plante alimentaire, que du bouclier d'argent de Scipion."¹ In most of his works we continually meet the Nature simile, often Pindaric in its ornateness, which is not, as in many authors, purely artificial, but instinct, as in Chateaubriand, with life and feeling for Nature.

He goes farther yet. We have totally forgotten Nature, he reminds us—so much so that we have no terms to describe a mountain save the bare minimum of "base" "sommets," and "flanks." "Il n'est donc pas étonnant que les voyageurs rendent si mal les objets naturels. . . . Parlent-ils d'une plante, ils en détaillent bien les fleurs, les feuilles, l'écorce, les racines; mais son port, son ensemble, son élégance, sa rudesse ou sa grâce, c'est ce qu'aucun ne rend."¹ What is the remedy for this imperviousness to beauty? Simply that the young writer must cease to "mendier des pensions auprès des grands, et de donner des honoraires aux libraires"; he must retire, as the author himself has done, to some lonely spot and meditate upon the Nature which he wishes to absorb. But his advice, he adds, has not been well received. The date of it is 1789!

Whither are we tending? To a revolution of society, the description of which we have already found in the works of Jean-Jacques, and to a glorification of nothing less than the savage state. His Paul and Virginie are two young people who have attained a *bonheur passager* by being brought up in the very bosom of Nature; the inference (sadly illogical) is that the human race can only gain a "bonheur durable" when it is brought back to her eternal

¹ *Voyage à l'Ile de France.*

laws. In a well-known passage of *Paul et Virginie*, Saint-Pierre combines Rousseau's views on the *sciences inutiles* of the conventional school education and Diderot's repugnance to the *triste morale* which sets up arbitrary rules of conduct and pretends that it is a sin to disobey them. Instead of these, the wise man will take as his guide the laws of Nature, living not necessarily in absolute solitude, but certainly far from society; he will then develop harmoniously, in accordance with the design of God, and, far from becoming what we call a savage, will attain to a truer humanity.¹

This thesis, like Rousseau's, is hardly practicable for any considerable portion of the human race. A great part of Saint-Pierre's writing, nevertheless, is both political and practical, and we may briefly notice a few of his principles. He lays great stress, in the first place, on the necessity of studying Nature, from the laws of which are derived all the true virtues which can be found in society. In Nature are the models and originals of all sciences and arts; most of our vaunted works are but reflections of her skill. One of the greatest of natural laws may be termed Saint-Pierre's second principle—that of freedom. Freedom of thought—that is to say, of speech and the press, for no Government, however tyrannical, can coerce the conscience—religious freedom, the abolition of slavery (one of his strongest tenets), and political freedom for all, down to the peasant who performs the most necessary and sacred of all duties—these he demands at a time when France, downtrodden and oppressed, was preparing to rise and strike her oppressors. Saint-Pierre's third great principle is the brotherhood, not alone of men of one nation—the *Fraternité* of the Revolution—but of the

¹ See, for example, *Voyage à l'Ile de France, Vœux d'un Solitaire, De la Nature de la Morale*.

nations themselves. He sees signs that a new feeling of fraternity, based on a better mutual understanding, has already begun. The North, he says, is leading the way—significant words, to be taken up later in another sense by Mme. de Staël. Russia, for instance, employs servants of all nations, mainly through the influence of Peter the Great. But France must take the foremost part, and Bernardin addresses to Louis XVI. his fervently oratorical *Vœux pour les Nations*, in which he implores the Sovereign first of all to redress the grievances of “femmes opprimées par les lois,” “enfants rendus misérables par notre éducation,” and “paysans dépouillés par les impôts,” and to give the so-called *Tiers Etat* its rightful position of superiority to the other two.

There is little to choose between Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in their attitude towards religion. They are frankly deistic, approaching at times a kind of pantheism, which, however, is not formulated as a belief. In all his writings, Saint-Pierre is strongly opposed to the materialistic conception of the universe current in his age; and part of the idealistic charm which gave *Paul et Virginie* its popularity is in the simple faith with which the author endows his characters. We need not stay to examine Saint-Pierre's breathless apologetics. He begs the question of the existence of God in such dangerous phrases as, “Je sais bien que Dieu n'a pas besoin de mon faible témoignage pour manifester son existence,”¹ and in another place dismisses it thus: “Il y a un Dieu, mon fils: toute la nature l'annonce: je n'ai pas besoin de vous le prouver. Il n'y a que la méchanceté des hommes qui leur fasse nier une justice qu'ils craignent.”²

¹ *De la Nature de la Morale.*

² *Paul et Virginie.* The whole of the address to Paul, at the conclusion of the book, from which this extract is taken, is instructive in this connection.

His Pariah, in *La Chaumière Indienne*, states the case for Nature-religion quite in the manner of Jean-Jacques. It is more important to notice the "théologie douce" which marks *Paul et Virginie*, his *chef-d'œuvre*. In this two distinct currents are discernible. There is the natural religion which can be found in all his work, and which of itself leads both to morality and spirituality: "une religion pure, aidée par des mœurs chastes, les dirigeait vers une autre vie, comme la flamme qui s'envole vers le ciel lors qu'elle n'a plus d'aliment sur la terre."¹ But superimposed upon this, and forming another link between Rousseau and Chateaubriand, there is the Christian religion—one had almost said Catholicism—in a somewhat primitive but very real guise. Paul and Virginie are taught to believe in a personal God—not an exacting Deity with a scale of terrible punishments for naughty children, but a loving Father Who is solicitous for the welfare of each of His creatures, Who orders every event of their lives, Who must be invoked in every trouble, and to Whom we owe thanks for every good gift. They are present at family prayer, when Mme. de la Tour reads a simple story from the Bible (usually, it may be noted, of a pathetic character); and though they observe no feasts nor fasts (for Nature-religion, intervening here, reminds them that every day, with its fresh revelation of Nature's God, is a day of festival), the elders of the family walk regularly every Sunday to Mass, and even make the important concession to Society of wearing shoes for the occasion!

In spite of Bernardin's implied protest against conventional morality, his own works are full of irreproachable platitudes which would not at all bear investigation in the

¹ *Paul et Virginie*.

light of Nature, and of other maxims and episodes which can only be described as priggish. These last appear most often in *Paul et Virginie*, and are cited not merely for the sake of emphasising its blemishes, but as showing the high (conventional) moral tone to which the story attains. Let us, then, forget that Saint-Pierre has decried the laws of society when we listen to the edifying words of the woman whose child has been born out of wedlock: "Ses maux étaient venus d'avoir négligé l'hymen. . . . 'Je n'ai connu le malheur,' dit-elle, 'qu'en m'écartant de la vertu.'" We may take as exaggerated instances of the Sandford-and-Merton tone of this story Virginie's: "On ne fait son bonheur qu'en s'occupant de celui des autres," "Il ne faut rien faire, pas même le bien, sans consulter ses parents."

To the idealistic qualities which gave *Paul et Virginie* a success,¹ both immediate and eventual, far above that of Saint-Pierre's remaining works, and which did much to keep alight the torch already flickering into flame, must be added the kindred traits of melancholy and emotionalism.

Bernardin was eminently *sensible* to external influences, whether of Nature or humanity, and his two ideal families are equally so; their souls are touched by the simplest sights of Nature and inflamed by the mere recital of some storm or shipwreck. They shed tears on every possible occasion; sentimentality seems to be in some way con-

¹ It had, of course, a tremendous vogue when it was first published (1786), and Saint-Pierre bears testimony to the comparatively disappointing reception accorded to some of his other writings. It was translated into at least seven European languages, and it became a household word throughout France; many mothers, for example, named their children after the hero and heroine.

nected, if not identified, with virtue, so that we find Virginie described more than once in such terms as "cette sensible et vertueuse demoiselle." The story might well be described as *larmoyante*; it set half Europe weeping, which is not surprising in an age "qui aime mieux rentrer en lui-même que s'étendre au dehors." There is much real pathos in the book, especially in the simple and tragic conclusion, and only occasionally do we strike a note of false sentimentality.

There is less of melancholy than of emotionalism in the descriptive writings of Saint-Pierre, but it looms large in *Paul et Virginie*. Paul is emphatically too masculine and practical to be considered as a type of the Romantic hero. Yet he is frequently "accablé de mélancolie"; he likes to sit in some "wild spot," "la tête appuyée contre le rocher, et les yeux fixés vers la terre." Trouble at once affects his reason: "Le désespoir lui ôtait la raison. Ses yeux étincelaient, la sueur coulait à grosses gouttes sur son visage en feu, ses genoux tremblaient, et je sentais dans sa poitrine brûlante son cœur battre à coups redoublés." Why, we ask, this despair and this emotion? Simply because Virginie is about to take a voyage to Europe. Paul is inconsolable: "Sa tête altière était baissée, et un torrent de pleurs coulait de ses yeux. Sa mère, mêlant ses larmes aux siennes, le tenait embrassé sans pouvoir parler." Yet Saint-Pierre, unlike many of his followers, recognises that this state of mind is a weakness, remarking at the end of the story that "les malheurs du premier âge préparent l'homme à entrer dans la vie," and that Paul could not meet real trouble, when it came, with fortitude, because he had never encountered any troubles in his childhood.

Melancholy, however, is also presented to us as an ideal—the melancholy, that is, which is inspired by solitude

and communion with Nature. Just as *sensibilité* is combined with virtue in the character of Virginie, so melancholy adds to the dignity of Mme. de la Tour, “une personne d’une figure intéressante, pleine de noblesse et de mélancolie.” In the *Voyage à l’Ile de France* the people of the Cape are described with great sympathy—the description would fit the Romantics equally well—as “des gens mélancoliques qui aiment mieux sentir qu’raisonner.” And in the wild, wind-swept forest haunts of Paul we are made to feel the dull murmur of the swirling tree-tops, “like the far-off sound of an organ filling [him] with deepest melancholy.”

It may be interesting to note in conclusion the important position in the descriptive literature of France occupied by the little islands of Mauritius and Réunion, which, were it not for the names of Chateaubriand and Loti, one might almost regard as the perennial source of French exoticism. They have inspired at least five writers of modern times, writers of gifts as considerable and of compass as varied as Parny, Bertin, Leconte de Lisle, Bernardin, and George Sand, the first three born in Réunion, only the last unacquainted with it at first hand. The valley of Bernica in Réunion, which witnessed the despair of Parny, which Bernardin visited in the course of his journey to Mauritius, forms a fitting background to the final scene of *Indiana*; and to realise still more fully the value of the rich vein of poetry which *Paul et Virginie* opened up, we have only to read Leconte de Lisle’s *Le Manchy*, *La Fontaine aux Lianes*, *Le Bernica*:

“La liane y suspend dans l’air ses belles cloches
Où les frelons, gorgés de miel, dorment blottis;
Un rideau d’aloès en défend les approches;
Et l’eau vive qui germe aux fissures des roches
Y fait tinter l’écho de son clair cliquetis.

“ Quand l'aube jette aux monts sa rose bandelette,
Cet étroit paradis, parfumé de verdeurs,
Au-devant du soleil comme une cassolette,
Enroule autour des pics la brume violette
Qui, par frais tourbillons, sort de ses profondeurs.”

CHAPTER VI

ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

It seems not unreasonable to suppose that the poet whose work is the fine flower of Hellenism, the last echo of the classical song begun by Ronsard, would have turned in his grave could he have known that in 1827 his work was being claimed by Sainte-Beuve as the earliest note in what he would have regarded as the noisy and somewhat discordant Romantic concert. Even the graceful compliment which compared his verse to "*les deux portes d'ivoire de l'enceinte nouvelle*" would hardly have disarmed him, and he would have preferred to the "forest of the Mississippi" which it contained the woods and porticoes of Versailles or the sun-bathed hills of Hellas. It is doubtful if he would have been appeased even had he known that he was succouring the needy and providing with a coat of arms and a respectable pedigree that unhappy foundling the Romantic muse, forced in the face of a classical and disapproving world to cast about for some sort of a family tree. The discoverer of the relationship was indeed considerate enough to regard him as no more than a cousin-german several times removed, but the rest of the family were more effusive, not to say filial, in their attitude.

As a matter of fact, Chénier was in all essentials a thoroughgoing Classic, and such Romantic traits as he possessed, whatever their influence on later poets, were

only an incidental part of his genius. It needs only the most superficial study of his works to realise what has so often been repeated of late years, that he was in every way a son of the eighteenth century: the only difference that separated him from contemporary bards was that he was a poet and they were not. All had the same ideas and the same aspirations, but Chénier possessed in addition that incalculable "little more"—the gift of poetic vision and the power of poetic expression.

That part of his work to which it seems he attached the greatest importance—inasmuch as, though he sketched it out in his ambitious youth, he laid it aside to be completed when his powers had matured—was the didactic poetry destined, he hoped, to make him the Lucretius of the *Encyclopédie*. And even the fragmentary outlines which remain show that this might very well have been so, but for the tragic blunder of those who held his own cherished beliefs on liberty and progress.

L'Invention, a poem of only three hundred and ninety-two lines, is his *Art Poétique*, and contains the theory which the Romantics left on one side, but which Leconte de Lisle and Sully Prudhomme triumphantly developed in the second half of the century. The poet, says Chénier, is to imitate the example of the Ancients—in avoiding the imitation of any previous poet whatever. They painted at first-hand the arts and the science of their day—

"Leur siècle est en dépôt dans leurs nobles volumes.

Tout a changé pour nous, mœurs, sciences, coutumes."

Why, then, he cries, should the modern writer continue to produce feeble commonplaces based on what may or may not have been original two thousand years ago? Why should he still coast timidly along the too well known

shore, instead of sounding the treasure-laden depths of the open sea ?

“ Torricelli, Newton, Kepler et Galilée,
Plus doctes, plus heureux dans leurs puissants efforts,
À tout nouveau Virgile ont ouvert des trésors.”

Buffon, Bailly, Cassini, the explorers, have furnished rich matter for the poet's hand: if Homer and Virgil were living to-day, would they neglect it as unenterprising moderns are so prone to do ? And so he comes to his conclusion, destined ultimately to open a new era in poetry:

“ Changeons en notre miel leurs plus antiques fleurs;
Pour peindre notre idée empruntons leurs couleurs;
Allumons nos flambeaux à leurs feux poétiques;
Sur des pensers nouveaux faisons des vers antiques.”

In *L'Hermès* he puts his theories into practice, and had the poem been completed, it would, it seems, have been their complete justification. The anecdote which tells how he exclaimed on the way to the guillotine, “ Et j'avais pourtant quelque-chose là ! ” is no doubt one of those pleasing inventions which deal with the romantic might-have-been rather than the prosaic fact; but Chénier's apocryphal remark is very true in reference to *L'Hermès*. His contemporaries had conceived the highest hopes of the work they knew only by name: as early as 1782 Lebrun could write:

“ On sait que, de Lucrèce effaçant le grand nom,
Assise au char ailé de l'immortel Newton,
Ta Minerve se plonge au sein de la nature ”—

and if his metaphor is mixed, his meaning is unmistakable. Chénier himself regarded the work as his *magnum opus*, and there is genuine emotion in his address to

“ Mon fils, mon Hermès, ma plus belle espérance,
[Le] fruit des longs travaux de ma persévérance.”

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Even in the fragments that remain it is possible to discover most of the leading ideas of the century: protest against the inequality of rich and poor—

“ Dans nos vastes cités, par le sort partagés,
Sous deux injustes lois les hommes sont rangés ”;

a reference to the social contract and the independence of the individual in a state of Nature; a hatred of religious superstition, expressed in a translation of Lucretius' lines on Epicurus; a Voltairean love of tolerance (since

“ Sous une loi de sang un peuple est sanguinaire ”);

and a Voltairean contempt for Charles XII. of Sweden and his like:

“ Ces héros conquérants, meurtrières idoles.”

The true heroes are those who have enlightened mankind, and they alone deserve altars. For light and ever more light is the great *desideratum* :

“ Souvent mon vol, armé des ailes du Buffon,
Franchit avec Lucrèce, au flambeau de Newton,
La ceinture d'azur sur le globe étendue.”

Above all, the philosopher will avoid the hypnotic influence of the fixed idea; he will believe with Montaigne—whom Chénier quotes—that “ le monde est une branloire perpétuelle,” and will be very slow to decide, with his finite means of judging, that the most improbable hypotheses are impossible.

In another important branch of his work the Romantics would find as little on which to base their claims to relation-ship: the elegy of Chénier shows him rather as a follower of Ronsard than a predecessor of Lamartine. He takes up the theme of Ronsard's most famous sonnet to Hélène:

“ Hâtons-nous, l'heure fuit. Hâtons-nous de saisir
L'instant. . . .”

Like Ronsard, he fears death, and it is as a pagan that he faces it:

“ Vous-même choisirez à mes jeunes reliques
 Quelque bord fréquenté des pénates rustiques,
 Des regards d'un beau ciel doucement animé,
 Des fleurs et de l'ombrage, et tout ce que j'aimai.”

Very different from the muse of whom Lamartine could write, “ J'ai parfumé mon cœur pour lui faire un séjour,” is the festive group of Chénier's youthful Elegies—

“ Promenant les éclats de leurs folles orgies,
 Et les cheveux épars, se tenant par la main ”;

but they were as close to the epicurean spirit of the eighteenth century as they were repugnant to the Christianity of the early nineteenth.

Neither, on the whole, is Chénier Romantic in his love of Nature. Sincere he undoubtedly is: he prefers “ la fraîcheur des rustiques asiles ” to the glories and the struggles of the city; and he dreams in a gloomy London coffee-house of the Falls of the Rhine and the glacier of the Rhone; of Switzerland, with its

“ Monts chevelus, verts et sombres remparts,
 Qui contenez ses flots pressés de toutes parts.”

But though he expresses a rather perfunctory wish to live and die on their rocky summits, he really desires no more of Nature than Pope and La Fontaine and Horace had desired before him:

“ Je veux un jour en des bords retirés,
 Sur un riche coteau ceint de bois et de prés,
 Avoir un humble toit, une source d'eau vive
 Qui parle, et dans sa fuite et féconde et plaintive
 Nourrisse mon verger, abreuve mes troupeaux.”

For the rest, his “ desert ” will be still further embellished if only Clémentine will deign to adorn it. Such a placid

and even bucolic ideal would certainly not have met the views of any of the Romantics—except possibly Hugo in his more domesticated moments.

And yet the scenes which Chénier loves are as beautiful in their way as any of the more brilliant or stormier landscapes of a later day. Just as the key-word of Sénancour's descriptions is *ennui*, and his most typical scene a barren valley traversed by a sluggish brook, its course impeded by struggling alder-roots and its surface coated with sickly water-scum, so the word *fraîcheur* occurs constantly in the scenes described by Chénier. Not one of his landscapes is without its stream, issuing from a cool, dark grotto and presided over by its silver-footed nymph. Like Wordsworth, he has "white sheets of water" ever before his eyes; his rivers have the limpidity and the calm, though not the grandeur, of Wordsworth's lakes, rather than the bustling prettiness of the Tennysonian brook. He speaks of

"Le roc frais et sombre,
D'où, parmi le cresson et l'humide gravier,
La naïade se fraye un oblique sentier";

and in the *Bucoliques* thus summarises his favourite topics:

"Philomèle, les bois, les eaux, les pampres verts,
Les muses, le printemps, habitent dans mes vers. . . .
La source aux pieds d'argent qui m'arrête et m'inspire
Y roule en murmurant son flot léger et pur."

As these pictures stand, they have much in common with the landscapes of Ronsard, his

"Antres, et vous fontaines,
De ces roches hautaines
Qui tombez contre-bas
D'un glissant pas. . . ."

Deduct the Naiad and Philomel, the muses and the vine-boughs, all the conventional *décor* used by the Pléiade and eighteenth-century elegists alike, and one obtains something which closely resembles in its freshness and beauty those scenes of Berry which form the most enduring charm of George Sand. But with Chénier this background is a background, and nothing more; there is no trace of the pathetic fallacy in his descriptions. His only independent seascape is conceived in exactly the same spirit:

“ Et moi, quand la chaleur, amenant le repos,
Fait descendre, en été, le calme sur les flots,
J’aime à venir goûter la fraîcheur du rivage,
Et, bien loin des cités, sous un épais feuillage,
Ne pensant à rien, libre et serein comme l’air,
Rêver seul, en silence et regardant la mer.”

The fact that Chénier notices the sea at all shows that he is no longer purely Classic; but one has only to compare the feelings it arouses in him with those of Chateaubriand at Combourg or Hugo in Guernsey to see that he is equally far from being Romantic. To him may with justice be applied the rule given by Mme. de Staël: “ Les bosquets, les fleurs et les ruisseaux suffisaient aux poètes du paganisme; la solitude des forêts, l’océan sans bornes, le ciel étoilé, peuvent à peine exprimer l’éternel et l’infini dont l’âme des chrétiens est remplie.”¹

Furthermore, Chénier is classical not only in his feeling for Nature, but in his opinion of that poetry of the North which deals chiefly with Nature. During his stay in London he read English poets as well as the English philosophers and novelists. His interest in the German Gessner has already been mentioned. He notes, for future reference, now a passage from the *Seasons*, now one from

¹ *De l’Allemagne*, ii. 8.

Henry IV., *Hamlet*, or *Measure for Measure*; he writes of blind Ossian and his ancestors in their cloudy palaces; he is not sure whether he ought to congratulate Maria Cosway on being the compatriot of Pope, or Pope on being the compatriot of Maria Cosway.

It is astonishing to find among his MSS. the scenario of a tragedy on the defeat of Varus, the theme of which is drawn from the *Arminius* of J. E. Schlegel (produced in Paris in 1773), while the treatment is influenced by that vague *ossianisme* which included an interest in Scandinavia also. Chénier's play is to contain a "chant lugubre des bardes à imiter d'Ossian." The victorious barbarians are to offer to a statue of Odin the eagles of the defeated Romans, what time the bards intone another chant, of which each strophe ends with the bloodthirsty refrain—

"Bois, Odin, c'est du sang romain,"

quite in the most finished style of Millevoye. All this is unlike Chénier, and suggests that the idea of his tragedy was evolved in a moment of weakness. He is as a whole strongly prejudiced against English poetry. He admires Milton, "grand Aveugle dont l'âme a su voir tant de choses," "homme sublime qui a des taches comme le soleil," and *Paradise Lost* is the model on which he hopes to write his *Suzanne*. But even the classical work of Milton, far more the poetry of England as a whole, is at its best merely "inculte et brave." Words fail him to describe it at its worst, when patriotic Britons, resolved that they never will be slaves, decline to bow even to common sense in art, and prefer to remain

"Tristes comme leur ciel toujours ceint de nuages,
Enflés comme la mer qui frappe leurs rivages,
Et sombres et pesants comme l'air nébuleux
Que leur île farouche épaissit autour d'eux."

In his ideas, in his subject-matter, and in his lack of any cosmopolitan feeling, Chénier is thus quite un-Romantic; the same is true with regard to his theory of art. To him the poet is not an inspired seer, a torch guiding the nations, "une force qui va," but "une abeille industrieuse," a studious and scholarly person of the type of Montaigne, whose work is a mosaic made up of chips from the masterpieces of the past. Poetic imagination is of comparatively slight importance: why, after all, should one trouble to invent when one has Italy and England and Greece and Rome—four store-houses all excellent to steal from? It is art that matters—the art that will conceal with a band of gold the join between Chénier's own cloth and the purple which he has "conveyed" from Virgil, the art that will graft imperceptibly on his wild fruit-trees branches from the orchard of antiquity:

"Tantôt chez un auteur j'adopte une pensée . . .
Tantôt je ne retiens que les mots seulement."

It is a doctrine of bare-faced plagiarism; but, as the example of Molière shows, it takes a great genius to make a really satisfactory plagiarist.

Again, Chénier does not agree with the Romantics that the vocabulary stands in need of additions. Only the bad workman, he declares, complains of the inadequacy of his materials: only the foolish author of a feeble book will complain in his haughty Preface that it is the weakness and the frigidity of the language that are at fault. Lebrun, Racine, Boileau (significant order of merit!) have succeeded well enough; in their hands the language is perfect:

"Doux, rapide, abondant, magnifique, nerveux."

His frequent use of periphrasis suggests that Chénier might well be content with a restricted vocabulary. The

fortunate possessor of "les glands dont l'Yémen recueille la moisson" would naturally not feel the need of anything so ordinary as coffee.

Reason, according to *l'Invention*, forms an all-important check. All that is in Nature is not in art; the theory of the grotesque is condemned in advance. The essence of poetry is not

"Entasser, sans dessein et sans forme
Des membres ennemis en un colosse énorme."

On the other hand, the poet selects and combines:

"Des traits de vingt beautés forme la beauté même."

Again, it is reasonable and natural that poetry should be divided into a score of different types:

"Pindare à sa lyre, en un couplet bouffon,
N'aurait point de Marot associé le ton"—

a remark, by the way, which brought down on the head of its maker a paternal rebuke in the *Contemplations*, based on the supposed compatibility of Dante and Rabelais.

It remains, then, to ask, "Where, if at all, was Chénier Romantic?" His most obvious influence relates to form rather than to matter—"il retrempa la lyre." The Alexandrine, which had been feeble and colourless or else emphatic and monotonous, becomes at last what Ronsard would gladly have made it, the modern equivalent of the classic hexameter. For Chénier bases his reforms, not on a consideration of the possibilities of the Alexandrine in itself, but rather on the example of the Ancients: hence the boldness and the success of his innovations, hence, too, the occasional rigidity of a too classical turn. Rhyme he leaves severely alone. So long as the rhythm of a line is well marked and harmonious, its conclusion is naturally of little importance; unlike the Romantics, he is not

reduced to covering a multitude of metrical sins with the useful cloak of *rime riche*. Hence he makes full use of those old and faithful friends, *pleur* and *douleur*, *montagne* and *campagne*, *tristesse* and *détresse*, words in *-ent*, in *-age*, in *-able*, in *-é*—all the well-worn combinations that Gautier so much despised.

Another cause of his comparative indifference to rhyme is probably to be found in his free use of *enjambement*—quite the most important of his contributions to French prosody. In the wonderful skill with which he handles the period, now suspending it on a single word, now unfolding clause after clause in regular progression, now reviving in his tirades the declamatory power the secret of which had been buried with Corneille, he owes most to the Ancients, but much as well to Milton. And it was from Milton and the Ancients alike that he learnt the value of picturesque enumerations and sonorous names—

“Clanis, Démoléon, Lycotas et Riphée.”

Almost from the beginning we notice the influence of his methods on the Romantics. Lamartine, indeed, is unaffected—much of *Les Méditations* was written, if not published, before the appearance of Chénier's poems—but Hugo and Vigny from the first show themselves faithful disciples, not only learning from their predecessor, but going to the masters he had consulted before them. The period of Chénier, more varied and more passionate, handled with still greater energy, becomes the period of Hugo: from *Cromwell* and *Les Orientales* to *La Légende des Siècles* the enumeration of polysyllabic names adds much to the majesty, if sometimes little to the meaning, of Hugo's verse. And Vigny, with that restraint characteristic of his temperament, puts into practice the same lessons as Hugo.

It was Chénier, too, who directed their thoughts to the epic form, and discovered to Vigny that *poème* which seemed to contemporaries a complete novelty, uniting the spirit of the long epic with the dimensions of the short tale in verse. As a whole, sustained composition was not the strong point of the Romantics: the example of Chénier proved to them—perhaps unfortunately—that “the small change of the epic,” as Gautier called it, was quite as good currency as more imposing coin. Here, however, it was treatment rather than subject-matter that was affected. Vigny began faithfully with *Symétha* and *La Dryade* (the latter of which is influenced by Gessner as well as by Chénier), but soon the Bible and the Middle Ages claimed him. That Hugo was in most ways out of sympathy with the spirit of the *Bucoliques* is shown by the “classical” poems of *La Légende des Siècles*, in which the heroes are the grotesquely powerful Titans, the conquered gods of the old dynasty, and the “pale Olympians” are represented as feeble and cowardly usurpers. His favourite Pan, “tout regardé à la fois sous toutes ses faces,” is an eminently Romantic conception. His wild landscapes are lit up by something considerably more lurid than the white light which permeates Chénier’s pictures: everywhere he prefers the complications of mediæval and Eastern civilisations to the unity and serenity of classical antiquity.

Even as regards subject-matter, however, it is impossible absolutely to deny Chénier’s influence. The humanitarianism which appears in *Le Mendiant*, *L’Esclave*, and *La Liberté* is typical of the eighteenth century, yet it may well have affected Hugo in his descriptions of the poor and the oppressed. Chénier’s treatment of Nature, we have seen, does not altogether correspond to the Romantic ideal; yet, on the other hand, it makes a perceptible advance in the process whereby this latter was evolved.

The *philosophes* had no idea of patriotism, but Chénier's political writings, his two noble hymns to France—one of them suggested not only by Virgil's praise of Italy, but, it seems, by Thomson's praise of England as well—the poems published during his lifetime, and, above all, the *Iambes*, show that he was strongly imbued with a love of his country, and possessed that national consciousness which characterises the Romantics.

The *Iambes* contain one of Chénier's most important contributions to Romanticism. During the sixteenth century satire had been polemical and generally abusive; Boileau improved its manners and developed its didactic side; Voltaire and his contemporaries turned it into a series of infinitely petty but infinitely venomous pin-pricks. With Chénier it returns to its original type and becomes essentially lyrical.

Every line throbs with impassioned meaning: indignation, pity, contempt, despair for himself, but still more despair for his country, are expressed in words to which the epithet "winged" can truly be applied. Violence and rhetoric are not absent, but, though they may add little to the reputation of the artist, in this case at least they increase one's respect for the patriot: his rhetoric is never mere frigid declamation, and his violence is not the perfunctory attitude assumed by the professional pleader. Here at last lyric poetry comes into its own: here is at least part of the inspiration of Hugo's *Châtiments* and Barbier's *Iambes*—the resemblance in the latter case extending even to the metre.

Last of all, and perhaps most important of all, we must consider those poems which link Chénier with Lamartine, the Odes to Fanny, far more imbued with the genuine elegiac spirit than the so-called elegies of his earlier and happier days. They were written in 1792 and 1793 to

Mme. Laurent Lecoulteux, when Chénier had thrown up in despair the useless struggle against the Jacobins and had retired to Versailles, broken in mind and body, incapable of further effort. Forgotten now were the poetic ambitions of the past and the fierce political strife of the capital in which he had till recently been engaged. Now he sought only

“L’abandon, l’obscurité, l’ombre,
Une paix taciturne et sombre”;

and he found them at Versailles, not the Versailles of old days, adorned with the magnificence of a Court, but rather a countryside of peaceful meadows and silent forests, made at once more beautiful and more melancholy by the pale expanses of the Seine, as well as by the contrast with its past glories and the thought of the excesses which were even then being committed at Paris. The poems written here are the simple expression of his moods day by day, the record of his love of Fanny and his love of Nature. They are essentially *poèmes de circonstance*: one is sent to Fanny with a present of fruit, another is inspired by her illness, which reminds him of her kindness to the sick folk of the neighbourhood, and so on with the rest.

Fanny is quite unlike the heroines of his earlier poems—Rose and Glycera, Julie “au rire étincelant,” even Camilla herself, a very different personage from these. Of Fanny we hear that

“La grâce, la candeur, la naïve innocence,
Ont, depuis *son* enfance,
De tout ce qui peut plaire enrichi *sa* beauté.”

She is pure and simple-hearted, serious and a little inclined to melancholy, absorbed in her love for her daughter “aux yeux doux, fleur débile et craintive,” herself delicate and almost “maladive” like a true Romantic heroine.

Suggestive as she is in many ways of Elvire, it is only fitting that she should have inspired a poem which may be set beside *Le Lac* :

“ Je pense: Elle était là. Tous disaient: ‘ Qu’elle est belle !
Tels furent ses regards, sa démarche fut telle,
Et tels ses vêtements, sa voix et ses discours
Sur ce gazon assise, et dominant la plaine,
Des méandres de Seine,
Rêveuse, elle suivait les obliques détours.”

In their themes, in the feelings which gave them birth, no less than in the sincere and simple form in which they are embodied, the poems to Fanny are the most “ Romantic ” part of Chénier’s work; but unfortunately for the theories of those who would have claimed him as their own, they happen to be just those which had little or no influence on the Romantics themselves.

CHAPTER VII.

INCREASE OF SOCIAL UNREST: BEAUMARCHAIS

IN spite of the actuality of some of their work, our study of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and André Chénier has led us far from the realm of practical politics. In reading *Paul et Virginie*, one readily forgets the narrow, artificial life amid which the heroine moved in Paris when thinking of the forests and wide seas of Mauritius; Chénier's *Hermès* is a mere skeleton, but the calm, remote beauty of his *Bucoliques* remains as fresh and adorable as ever. Yet it is important to remember that beneath all this idyllic grace and simplicity is smouldering a very volcano. It is only for the rich that life becomes a pastoral: great ladies may indeed play at keeping sheep and live on onion soup, but their sheep are washed and curled and tied with ribbon, their onion soup is an interesting *hors-d'œuvre* rather than a regular and inadequate meal. Lower down in the social scale this rusticity and optimism find no partisans. To the *philosophes* the peasant is what he was to La Bruyère, an unhappy being, half serf, half animal, tanned by scorching suns, racked by rheumatism, ever bent double at his hard and ungrateful labour in the fields. The royal shepherdesses of the Trianon are regarded with a feeling one-third amusement, two-thirds bitter if inarticulate anger at the lightness of heart which can get no more than a new sensation from the thought of human misery. It is only at Court that Gessner and Florian are

the favourite authors. The *Tiers Etat* prefers the works of Rousseau—and Rousseau on the origins of inequality rather than Rousseau on the blessings of religion and peaceful home life.

One can hardly exaggerate the influence of the philosophers in the creation of this social unrest. From the *Lettres persanes* onwards, every considerable work of the day attacks some feature in the existing order of things. *Gil Blas* lays bare the seamy side of governments, describes the long procession of intriguers and hangers-on that enters the throne-room by way of the back stairs; *Le Neveu de Rameau* dissects the whole social system and shows instinctive greed, instinctive selfishness and cruelty at the base of the whole fabric; *Candide* ingenuously proves that all is for the worst in this worst of all possible worlds. In pamphlet after pamphlet Voltaire preaches tolerance, attacks the ferocity and brutality of the law, the prejudice and stupidity of the official Church. He approaches the question of finance, and by his loving administration of his own little Pays de Gex, which he found a desert and left a fertile land with prosperous manufactures, shows Turgot the reforms that should and perhaps could be achieved in France. Of the subversive nature of Rousseau's work it is hardly necessary to speak; he sets the individual against society, the human conscience above all the decrees of Church and State, poor against rich, the free citizen against the tyrant King.

The theories of the philosophers made the Revolution, yet in no soil but that of France would they have germinated so quickly and borne such fatal fruit. Their influence was due not only to their intrinsic merits, but to the state of misery and chaos which provided their text and pointed their moral. The question of finance was at the root, not of the Revolution, for that would have come in any case,

but of the violence and bitterness that accompanied it. It is no doubt going too far to say that had France possessed an adequate system of taxation the monarchy would still remain unassailed; yet the exaggeration contains something of the truth—but for the hopeless financial muddle the inevitable constitutional developments might have taken place gradually and more or less painlessly, as in England. The trouble goes back past the Renaissance. Sully, Richelieu, Colbert, Turgot—none of these greatest of French Chancellors succeeded in remedying it; Turgot was the only one who made a constructive attempt to do so. The considerable temporary economies effected by the others were achieved simply by reforms in the working of the existing system, not by changes in the system itself. Hence each improvement was followed by a relapse, each relapse made subsequent improvement more difficult, and at last, giving up all effort, France drifted cheerfully down to the inevitable Niagara of bankruptcy.

It seems absurd that in one of the richest and most heavily taxed countries of Europe the Court should never have been able to make both ends meet; that the Queen should never have managed to pay her dressmakers' bills, and have relied on her brother the Emperor to honour her debts at cards; that half the ships in the navy should have remained rotting in harbour for want of crews and gear; that it should have been the rule and not the exception for the army to go without its pay for years together. Yet so it was. Thanks to the wasteful system of farming out the taxes, with all the opportunities for speculation it afforded, thanks to the privileges which exempted from payment nobles and clergy alike, thrusting the whole burden on the class least able to bear it, the country's assets were never sufficient to meet its liabilities, and

increased taxation seemed to result only in increased fortunes for the farmers-general.

Yet side by side with all this practical incompetence we have the growth of a distinguished school of theorists. When we in England speak of Adam Smith as the father of political economy, we are ignoring the existence of a series of far more enterprising economists in France. It was natural that the eighteenth century, with its love of general ideas, should be enthusiastic in the study of institutions; and though many of the *Economistes*, like their master Montesquieu, were interested in theory alone, yet their theory was bound to have an effect on other men's practice. Their programme was subversive enough. a land tax ("un impôt unique"), the nationalisation of property, Free Trade, State aid for rural industries, a policy of "back to the land"—these were the chief planks in the platform of Turgot, of Quesnay, of Mirabeau père, of the Physiocrats as a school.

Specially noteworthy is the emphasis they laid on rural depopulation, a process which had been steadily going on since the seventeenth century. Molière's country servants, stupid and boorish like Alain and Georgette in *l'Ecole des Maris*; frank, sensible, half-sophisticated, like those more accomplished types, Dorine, Martine, Toinette, show the first stage in it: they are beginning to acquire the smartness in retort and the universal disrespect of the Parisian born, but they still retain the old-time honesty of the village. By the eighteenth century, however, even the country-bred servants have become quite as demoralised as the Crispins and the Lisettes. Honesty does not pay: the Baronne in *Turcaret* goes so far as to dismiss her faithful Marine because of her unfortunate *penchant* for speaking the truth. Very telling in the same play is the "progress" of Turcaret's own man, Flamand, who ends his career as

"capitaine concierge de la porte de Guibray"—a very desirable post, he explains, with unlimited opportunities for pillage and the prospect of rising as high as the great farmer-general himself. Marivaux' *Paysan parvenu* gives an account of a similar career—that of the country lad who is taught to read and write by the parish priest, comes up to Paris to make his fortune, begins as a footman and, rising by more or less reputable means, ends as a farmer-general also.

An interesting account of the evolution of ideas which led to the desertion of the country districts is given in Rétif de la Bretonne's *Le Village*, a biography of his father Edmond. The latter was greatly attracted by the life of the capital, but his father had insisted on his remaining a yeoman farmer at Sacey: "Que serais-tu devenu à la ville? Un bon citoyen, je le veux bien; mais tes enfants, loin de ce pays, notre berceau, confondus avec la foule des citadins, auraient bientôt perdu le souvenir de notre origine. . . Restons ici . . . tout y est plein de nous; tout y rappellera notre honneur." But Edmond himself had very different views. Of all his fourteen children, he brought up only one for farm life—and that happened to be the one least fitted for it; to the others he unceasingly praised Paris, the home of freedom and equality, of happiness and culture, of which he thought "with the tender sentiment of a son for his mother." "Paris or our village," he would say, "but rather Paris than our village." Long before the time of Barrès, we see, novelists were occupied with the problem of "les déracinés," a problem which was perhaps even more serious in those days than it is now.

This constant influx from the country districts could not but have its effect on the character of Paris, and on the whole that effect was a bad one. The movement was

very similar in both causes and results to that which had led to the formation of the city mob at Rome, and which also had ended in revolution. The deterioration of the immigrants began almost at once. Deprived of the restraining influence of old associations, adrift without compass or oars on the troubled waters of life in a great city, they quickly acquired its vices, which lay on the surface, rather than its virtues, hidden in the depths. Hence we have a mobile, parasitical, poverty-stricken section of the populace, with weakened moral and physical stamina, living on its wits and thus cunning and ignorant at one and the same time, its passions easily stirred by the demagogue, responding to party cries rather than to principles—that section which was destined to thwart all hope of a constitutional revolution, to reign by terror until it was conquered by terror in its turn. The effect on the old Parisian population was equally bad: it had never been distinguished for its stability or its respect for authority, and, indeed, it was all the better for its independent and *frondeur* spirit. But beneath this there had formerly been a solid basis of real worth; the citizens of Paris, like the citizens of London, had represented all that was best in the life of the capital, and perhaps of the nation also. A change was now inevitable: the union of two different types of civilisation produced, as usual, the downfall of both. The resultant hybrid combined the bad qualities of the two parents—the only consolation is that, hybrid-like, it was unable to perpetuate them.

It would, of course, be a mistake to suggest that the unrest of the day was altogether bad, a sign rather of the wickedness of those who felt it than of the defects of the system against which they rebelled. Its greatest fault was not that it was unjustified, but that it was vague and ill-directed. The country was very definitely “agin’ the

Government," whatever that Government might chance to be: it criticised with a joyous impartiality both the *Parlements* and the *Coup d'État Maupeou* which suppressed them. But its discontent, if unreasoning, was far from being unreasonable. In the earlier half of the century, radical reforms in all departments of life had been so insistently demanded that their immediate coming seemed a matter of course. Yet still they lingered: statesman after statesman propped up now one portion, now another, of the tottering edifice, but none made an attempt to deal with it as a whole. Not only did no actual improvement take place: even the *status quo ante*, bad as it had been, could not be maintained, and just before the Revolution even the hungry years at the beginning of the century appeared as the "good old times."

Of all the writers of his day, Beaumarchais gives perhaps the fairest and yet the most emphatic expression to the universal unrest, as much in his life and character as in his two great comedies. That Pierre Caron, son of a watchmaker in the Rue Saint-Denis, a watchmaker's apprentice himself, could have become first music-master to Mesdames de France, then secretary to the King, and *ipso facto* a noble, is in itself a sign of the times. Saint-Simon, we remember, some fifty years earlier, spoke disparagingly of one Arouet, "qui était devenu une sorte de personnage dans la république des lettres, et même une manière d'important dans un certain monde"; and this same Arouet received more than one sharp rap over the knuckles when at the beginning of his career he assumed that M. de Voltaire could be the equal of a Rohan.

Beaumarchais' plays, like himself, are social portents, a fact that he was the first to realise: "Le théâtre est un géant qui blesse à mort tout ce qu'il frappe. On doit

réserver ses grands coups pour les abus et les maux publics." Social satire, a *genre* exhausted by the would-be imitators of Molière, offered no further resources to the writers of the eighteenth century. Nivelles de La Chaussée had substituted for it *comédie larmoyante*; Beaumarchais, after attempting to do the same in *Clavigo*, turned to the more fruitful *genre* of political satire. His tentative was not indeed entirely original: it has been said that the whole of the Declaration of the Rights of Man is to be found in the comic operas of the fifty years before the Revolution. We may go farther back. *Tartufe* is an attack on official religion: whatever may have been Molière's excuses and reservations, it remains true that the dignitaries who waged such a relentless struggle against it were moved not only by bigotry, but also by a sound instinct of self-preservation. It does not seem unduly fanciful to see in *Georges Dandin* and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* the first skirmishes of the battle between the *Tiers Etat* and the privileged orders; the former play, moreover, is the exact counterpart of the *Mariage de Figaro*, except that the unlucky Dandin, mocked and baffled by all the other characters, does not even succeed in winning the sympathies of the audience. The very different presentation of the same subject a hundred years later shows how far political ideas had travelled from the simpler code of Louis XIV.

But the political satire in Molière's plays is only incidental: his attacks on the *Marquis* are good-natured caricatures, and were received with amusement by their victims. The whole affair was something in the nature of a family joke; no one imagined that despised outsiders might take it up in grim earnest. Nothing, however, could be more savage than the satire of *Turcaret* some forty years later; not a single character escapes the author's

rough and bitter strictures. Society to Lesage is made up of knaves and dupes, and the dupes try in their turn to fleece even greater fools than themselves. Nobles, financiers, servants, all are scoundrels and impostors, the only difference being that the first class is more refined in its methods, the second more brutal, the third so cunning as to worst the other two. With sentimental and philosophical comedy we get more systematic opposition to the actual state of things: even Marivaux' fantastic *Ile des Esclaves* has not escaped the influence of the ideas of liberty and equality. Voltaire's *Nanine* reads English treatises on the subject:

"L'auteur prétend que les hommes sont frères,
Nés tous égaux . . . mais ce sont des chimères."

Diderot's *Père de Famille* is a plea for the *Tiers*. In Sedaine's *Philosophe sans le savoir*, the worthy banker, M. Vanderk, is a noble who has voluntarily resigned his rank, so convinced is he of the dignity of commerce: "nous sommes sur la terre autant de fils de soie qui lient ensemble les nations et les ramènent à la paix."

But *Nanine* is not seriously revolutionary. Voltaire's republican tirades are little more than an intellectual amusement; he was, after all, speaking at his ease. Sedaine and Diderot are more sincere, but even they do not speak for the people. Their hero is the comfortable merchant who has risen so far above the prejudices of M. Jourdain that he does not even wish to be a noble; possessed of the substance, he need not worry about the shadow. But the plays of Beaumarchais are the violent, passionate cry of those to whom the question of equality is a vital one; those who suffer actively from the arrogance of the privileged orders; the poor and oppressed, who cannot console themselves for the lack of

a "de" before their names by thinking of the healthy state of their pass-books. The monologue of Figaro threatens the irruption of the whole Faubourg St. Antoine. It lacks philosophic calm, but that is because it treats of actual facts—there is no arm-chair stoicism here. The resentment is as bitter and the revenge will be as terrible as the "provocation is great. Louis XVI., the plain man who for once saw farther than the intellectuals who despised him, was in the right when he exclaimed: "C'est détestable, cela ne sera jamais joué; il faudrait détruire la Bastille pour que la représentation de cette pièce ne fût pas une inconséquence dangereuse." But the inconsistency was committed; the Bastille was destroyed; and by a freak of destiny Beaumarchais was the man appointed to superintend its destruction.

Napoleon, wise after the event, agreed with Louis XVI.: "*Le Mariage de Figaro*, c'est déjà la Révolution en action." To see the truth of this statement we have only to examine the character of Figaro himself, chosen by the author as the representative of the *Tiers*, though, indeed, he represents only one side of it, and that the less worthy. He is none the less original because he comes of a long line of ancestors, from the cunning, thievish slave of classical comedy onwards. The development of his rôle in the work of Molière—who retains, however, many of the conventions of antiquity—and still more in the comedy of the eighteenth century, shows how fast the lines of social cleavage were becoming blurred.

The process was one of levelling down, not of levelling up; the degeneration of society is faithfully indicated by the increased importance of the valet and the soubrette in its comedies. Molière's Scapin and Mascarille are here the starting-point; but the Crispin and Hector of Regnard, the Frontin and Lisette of Lesage, with all the easy-going,

over-familiar servants of Marivaux, show that what had been in the seventeenth century largely a matter of convention was becoming in later years a simple matter of fact. In *Le Barbier* and *Le Mariage* Beaumarchais carries this process to its logical conclusion. Crispin and his like have been the superiors of their masters in wit and effrontery, in all but that vague something which makes them servile still; it remains for Figaro to appear as the superior of Almaviva in character as well as in intellect, and to engage with him in a struggle on equal terms. Crispin of *Le Légataire universel* worsts his master by a trick; Crispin "*rival de son maître*" completely fools every respectable character in the play that bears his name, but cuts a piteous figure when he is discovered by a coincidence and punished by a beating; Frontin in *Turcaret* wins the day by the still more simple process of downright theft, and settles down on the profits to "*faire souche d'honnêtes gens.*" Figaro alone dares to hurl open defiance, and that not at an impecunious *fil de famille*, but at a grandee of Spain. The very motives that prompt his match-making put him on a higher plane than that of the traditional valet, the go-between whose terms are strictly cash; he murmurs a sentimental "*Bless you, my children,*" where his predecessors would have hinted at a tip.

For Figaro is a philosopher and an educated man. Like Lesage's hero, he is a "*bachelier de Salamanque*"; he has been a veterinary surgeon—though the post he had applied for was that of an army doctor—a journalist, a poet, a playwright, and is now only plying his trade of barber while waiting for something to turn up. He is a stoic, too, everywhere superior to events, laughing at his troubles for fear of being obliged to weep at them, "*aidant au bon temps, supportant le mauvais; se moquant des sots, bravant les méchants; riant de sa misère et faisant*

la barbe à tout le monde." The censorship has gagged him, a cabal has hooted his play off the stage: he appears, smiling as ever, in Seville, ready to assist "la jeunesse et l'amour . . . d'accord pour tromper un vieillard."

The Figaro of *Le Mariage* is a different character from the Figaro of *Le Barbier*, and in some ways a less amiable one, a fact easily understood when it is remembered that between the writing of the two plays Beaumarchais was involved in his famous *procès Goëzmann*. For himself he not only experienced the law's delays, the pedantry and venality of its representatives, but discovered that, all these difficulties conquered, a *lettre de cachet* was waiting to cut short the debate in the aristocrat's favour, while the censorship was ever on the watch to prevent the oppressed from appealing to public opinion. Hence the energy with which he returns to the charge: "Les vices, les abus, voilà ce qui ne change point, mais se déguise en mille formes sous le masque des mœurs dominantes; leur arracher ce masque et les montrer à découvert, telle est la noble tâche de l'homme qui se voue au théâtre."

He attacks most vigorously that maladministration of justice from which he himself has suffered: in the trial of Figaro it is the legal system of France that is in the dock. In *Almaviva* we are shown the great man who openly flouts the laws of which he is the instrument, and shamelessly uses them for his own disgraceful ends. Brid'oison, the Justice Shallow of the French stage, with his ponderous imbecility, his irritating stammer, his insistence on "la-a forme," is ridiculous rather than wicked; but the course of the trial shows that if the law, as personified by him, "is an ass," it is a dangerous ass for all that. And not only is it possible, continues Beaumarchais, for a Brid'oison to buy a post that had much better be given for nothing: influence removes any remaining chance that

an appointment may be made for merit: "On pense à moi pour une poste, mais par malheur j'y étais propre: il fallait un calculateur, ce fut un danseur qui l'obtint." As to the victim of the judges chosen thus, Beaumarchais and Figaro alike can speak with feeling of his fate: at the entrance of a fortress he leaves both liberty and hope. The censorship, too, comes in for attention in the monologue which sums up the message of the play and the career of its author:

"On me dit que . . . pourvu que je ne parle en mes écrits ni de l'autorité, ni du culte, ni de la morale, ni des gens en place, ni des corps en crédit, ni de l'Opéra, ni des autres spectacles, ni de personne qui tienne à quelque-chose, je puis tout imprimer librement, sous l'inspection de deux ou trois censeurs."

Even *Le Barbier* abounds in quips against the nobles: "Je me crus trop heureux d'en être oublié, persuadé qu'un grand nous fait assez de bien quand il ne nous fait pas de mal." But here Figaro is only the impertinent valet, who can safely indulge in remarks that his master would not dream of taking seriously. In *Le Mariage* feeling is far stronger; the Count no longer gives his opponent the licence that he would have granted in the same contemptuous way to a Court fool. The struggle between them is no longer confined to a war of words, lightly spoken and soon forgotten on either side: Figaro rises to his full height as the representative of the *Tiers Etat*, asserting its superiority to the aristocrat in all but the mere accident of birth, and demanding for itself a place in the sun. Figaro's monologue is the explosion of the brooding rancour of centuries:

"Parce que vous êtes un grand seigneur, vous vous croyez un grand génie! Noblesse, fortune, un rang, des places, tout cela rend si fier! Qu'avez-vous fait pour tant

de biens ? Vous vous êtes donné la peine de naître et rien de plus : du reste, homme assez ordinaire ! Tandis que moi, morbleu. . . .”

The reception accorded to both the plays, more especially to the *Mariage*, is equally significant of the change that was coming over society. It was the nobles themselves who had called most persistently for its production; it was they who most vehemently applauded it. The first night was as “folle” as the “folle journée” itself; yet it would be unfair to regard the enthusiasm as a display of mere criminal irresponsibility, of the spirit that could fiddle while Rome was burning. The greater nobles of the time were singularly enlightened: Chénier’s friends, the Trudaines and François de Pange, were by no means isolated exceptions among them. Their zeal for reform was as great as that of the *philosophes*; the spirit of sacrifice which made them ready in 1789 to give up their privileges even before the *Tiers* had thought to demand them, the patriotism which kept men like Lafayette and Montmorin at their posts to the last—these were feelings not surpassed by the self-abnegation and the patriotism of the most fanatical of the Jacobins. Their indifference to the threats which growled beneath the dialogue and the songs of the *Mariage* was due to no insolent consciousness of their own superiority to criticism. They welcomed an attack on the old *régime* simply because they were convinced even more than the author that the old *régime* must fall. But they forgot that the wrongs of the past must be avenged as well as righted: they did not see in the play anything more than a brilliant indictment of abuses which they would proceed to remedy quite soon. Unfortunately, Figaro and his friends did not give them the time.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REVOLUTION

THE two great plays of Beaumarchais express, as we have seen, both the grievances and the aspirations which the Revolution was shortly to satisfy; and the ideas they contain are ideas we have met before in the works of Rousseau. It is perhaps unnecessary to remark that these ideas were far from being Rousseau's private property; some had been invented two thousand years before his day, practically all could trace their pedigree back to the Renaissance. Many a philosopher had supported them by appeals to the intellect; Rousseau ensured their triumph by an appeal to the heart.

In all ages individualism was the keynote of the system called his. "Fais ce que voudras," says Rabelais; "Il faut se réserver une arrière-boutique," says Montaigne; "Qu'un seul dise, s'il l'ose: Je fus meilleur que cet homme-là," says Rousseau. [It is Nature which sanctions the free development of the individual, Nature which forbids, on the other hand, that excessive ambition of the one which leads to the enslavement of the many. It is Nature which has made all men virtuous; society which, by creating sin, has created with it the necessary evil of civil law as opposed to the laws of Nature.] Hence the simple corollary: destroy society, and law will become unnecessary; the enterprising burglar will become a model citizen if only he is given as a right the property which, through

the present iniquitous system, he is now under the painful necessity of stealing.

It was in the relentless logic with which they reduced their theorems *ad absurdum* that the men of the Revolution differed from their forbears of the Renaissance. The heirs of a mathematical age, they could not see that the problem of life was not to be solved by the same methods as a problem in conics.

Buffon, indeed, fresh from the contemplation of vast geological periods, held scornfully aloof from the clamour of those impatient souls who desired to build Rome in a day, but this very attitude debarred him from exerting any influence on them. Rousseau, another biologist, also had some idea of the gradual march of evolution, but his cautious statement of it passed unnoticed among his more fervent aspirations after a world regenerated by a mere readjustment of property. Mme. Roland was but expressing the opinion of almost all her contemporaries when, in 1790, she declared: "Des comptes et de la raison ! il n'y a que cela pour ordonner les affaires et pour rendre les peuples heureux."

Hence the chief feature of the Revolution—one which explains its heights and its depths—was its absolute faith: [faith in humanity, in France, in virtue, in justice, in benevolence; faith in its ideals and in its power to realise them.] Because of this, no sacrifice was too great, no task too hard. The country, for the first time in its history united, held at bay the powerful foes that hemmed it in, until at last the ragged armies of the Republic, ill-fed, ill-armed, yet invincible in their fanaticism, carried their doctrines across the frontiers of the lands they wished to enlighten, not to enslave. And while this struggle was being waged on the borders, there was yet time for reform after reform at home: a new code of laws, a new calendar,

new weights and measures, a new system of education—all these were undertaken, and most were successfully achieved. For in both home and foreign policy, the keynote of the Revolutionaries was their readiness for self-sacrifice. It was for posterity that they devised new laws, for their fellow-men that they fought against all the tyrants of Europe: “enfants perdus de l’armée de la liberté naissante,” as Mme. Roland describes them, they were ready to suffer themselves as well as to inflict suffering on others, if only they might “préparer ainsi le bonheur des générations suivantes.”

Yet—“He that believeth shall not make haste.” The men of ’93 believed, but their impatience they could not restrain: indeed, it was in some ways a consequence of their belief, and they and theirs had already waited so long that to expect them to delay at the last would have been unreasonable. Their faith became fanaticism; their loyalty to the Republic one and indivisible made them pitiless towards those they thought its enemies; their love of swift and certain justice led them to abolish the safeguards of legal procedure; their love of humanity in general made them prescribe the guillotine for humanity in particular; suspicion and corruption undermined the whole fabric of a reformed society. In their haste they came to believe that the end justified the means; that, as Montesquieu had suggested, all was permissible when the safety of the State was concerned, until at last the end became obscure, and the Terror was held righteous for its own sake. As Robespierre put it, “If the strength of a republican Government in time of peace is virtue, in time of revolution it is both virtue and fear”—a doctrine that afforded sanction for the worst excesses.

It was in ’93 and ’94 that the influence of Rousseau was supreme, or rather that his name was most often invoked

and his more inflammatory works were most freely quoted. Never was the sanctity of the family more enthusiastically proclaimed—and this by a nation which was doing its best to weaken local and family ties and to dissolve itself into an aggregate of individuals. Never, even in the days when Prévost “se mit à pleurer, et tout son siècle avec lui,” was sentiment more in vogue: “les lumières de la raison se sont unies à l’instinct du sentiment *pour l’entretenir et l’augmenter*,” says Mme. Roland. In fact, to Rousseau were attributed all the vague ideas in the air at the time, and amongst them one at least which was contrary to the real spirit of his work—that of the perfectibility of mankind. Yet he had attacked the *sensualistes* of his own time, had declared that society was becoming more and more corrupt as it departed farther from the laws of Nature, that the golden age lay in the past, that “la nature humaine ne rétrograde jamais.” For the time it seemed that he had succeeded in his attempt to replace the idea of continuous progress by the idea of continuous evolution: during the last years of the *ancien régime* Providence took the place of Progress, and Rousseau and Bernardin triumphed over the *philosophes*.

Yet, during the darkest days of the Revolution, when system after system had been tried and found wanting, when famine and bloodshed, force and fraud, seemed to have shattered the whole structure of perfectibility, it rose again stronger and more imposing than ever in the *Esquisse* of Condorcet, at once an act of faith and a hymn of triumph. The author himself was a proscribed fugitive, but a few months after his suicide his work was published by the Convention at the expense of the State. The torch he had carried was taken up in another and a stronger grasp—that of Mme. de Staël. The first of her great works, *De la Littérature*, is altogether built up round

the idea of perfectibility—or, as Fontanes put it in his officially inspired critique, “la chimère d’une perfection qu’on cherche maintenant à opposer à ce qui est.” The lesson which Mme. de Staël learned from the Revolution was exactly the one on which its leaders most insisted, the lesson that “la raison et la philosophie acquièrent toujours de nouvelles forces à travers les malheurs sans nombre de l’espèce humaine.”

A belief in the value of education was the natural corollary to this belief in perfectibility. If, as the *idéologues* held, there was nothing in the mind of the individual which had not been first in his environment, then the one sure and infallible road towards perfection lay in the teaching of the young. Rousseau had approached the problem from a different point of view: to him education was the antidote to the poisons of society, not the instrument for bringing it to a higher stage of development—or of corruption, as he would have considered it; but in this case, as in so many others, his work is at one, in effect if not in intention, with that of his lifelong foes.

The whole century had been one of pedagogical experiment: Locke in England and Rousseau in France had rediscovered the fact that the child and not the book was the centre of school life, and that childhood was to be valued for itself, not considered as an unpleasant but inevitable phase in the process of becoming a man and a philosopher. Rousseau in particular had many disciples in both countries: Maria Edgeworth’s brother was brought up on “natural” principles, and developed into a very bad advertisement for them; so did Sabrina, the unlucky child brought up by Thomas Day, the author of *Sandford and Merton*, a man whose gloomy zeal quite distorted the humane theories he professed. To Day and Maria Edge-

worth, as the chief educational writers in England at the time, corresponded Mme. Roland and Jean Bon St. André. Both were thoroughly permeated with Rousseau's ideas: both aimed at the free development of the individual, both attached more importance to good feeling than to deep thinking, to both instruction was the least important part of education. Both also—in this point resembling the *philosophes* more than Rousseau—regarded education from a more or less utilitarian point of view, as being for the benefit of the State as much as for that of the scholar. Mme. Roland wrote a *Discours : comment l'éducation des femmes pourrait contribuer à rendre les hommes meilleurs*, a question much discussed at the time, as is shown by the reprinting in 1802 of Fénelon's *Traité sur l'éducation des filles*, with the spirit of which Mme. Roland's work has much in common. The attention now given to a subject which had previously been almost ignored—for the works of a writer like Fontenelle can hardly be regarded as a contribution to it—is an interesting proof of the statement that the movement for “women's rights” began with the Revolution, especially if we remember that Maria Edgeworth and Mary Wollstonecraft were writing on the same subject at the same time in England.

Jean Bon St. André, one of the “workers” of the Convention, who found time to discuss the reorganisation of education in the intervals of remodelling the Navy and rousing the ire of our English *Anti-Jacobin*, seems to speak with the voice of Rousseau himself:

“Eh bien ! ce sont des écoles formées sur ce modèle qu'il nous faut. Il nous faut des maîtres plus sensibles qu'instruits, plus raisonnables que savants, qui dans un lieu vaste et commode, hors des villes, hors de l'infection de l'air qu'on y respire et de la dépravation de mœurs qui s'introduit par tous les pores, soient les égaux, les amis,

les compagnons de leurs élèves; que toute la peine, que tout le travail de l'instruction soit pour le maître, et que les enfants ne se doutent même pas qu'ils sont à l'école; que dans des conversations familières, en présence de la nature et sous cette voûte sacrée dont le brillant éclat excite l'étonnement et l'admiration, leur âme s'ouvre aux sentiments les plus purs; qu'ils ne fassent pas un seul pas qui ne soit une leçon; que le jour, la nuit, aux heures qui seront jugées les plus convenables, des courses plus ou moins longues dans les bois, sur les montagnes, sur le bord des rivières, des ruisseaux, ou de la mer, leur fournissent l'occasion et les moyens de recevoir des instructions aussi variées que la nature elle-même, et qu'on s'attache moins à classer les idées dans leur tête qu'à les y faire arriver sans mélange d'erreur ou de confusion."

All this propaganda was not without its practical effect. With the ambitious but characteristic object of "regenerating human understanding," the Convention and the Directory undertook the regeneration of public education, now for the first time to be subsidised and regulated by the State. *Emile* was recognised as the charter of the new régime, and enthusiasts like M.-J. Chénier even wished to see all its suggestions translated into fact. Pestalozzi, whose own work owed much to Rousseau's influence, was made a French citizen and invited to Paris to help in the reform of the schools, an invitation he was unable to accept. But, as a whole, the greatest changes were made not so much in the methods of teaching, or even in the subjects taught, as in the organisation of the schools as a State Department—a result that might have been expected from a body with a passion for general rather than detailed legislation, and with executive powers not of the strongest.

For the same reason, the higher branches of education were affected more than the lower. The Academies of the old régime were completely remodelled, as being relics of an effete monarchy, and were incorporated into the Insti-

tut, "pour qu'elles fussent comme une encyclopédie vivante"—as indeed they became, much to the disgust of Napoleon, who returned to the old order of things, since it gave less scope to the ideologists. In 1795 the Convention founded the great Ecole Normale at Paris, "séminaire de la nature, de la vérité, de la raison, et de la philosophie," which was to take the place of the ancient University and to be the centre of a system of provincial colleges from which the village schools should be staffed.

One of the proposals of the reformers, quite in the spirit of Rousseau, was that for the Sorbonne and the colleges should be substituted schools of art and technology—a symptom of the reaction against clerical influence, particularly that of the Jesuits. This was due largely, no doubt, to natural prejudice against a system which had produced men who could die elegantly and even heroically, but who certainly could not live usefully: with the breakdown of polite society, the rejection of a merely social training came as a matter of course. Then, too, the reformers were sometimes men of science, sometimes men of action, never men of letters or genuine lovers of that antiquity of which they spoke so freely. Lakanel complained that children passed their time "à baragouiner du grec et du latin," and, as his views on the uselessness of so doing were shared by his colleagues, the system they evolved subordinated the classics to the sciences and to modern languages and history.

The first effect on literature of all this movement was to weaken still further the classical tradition, which had already suffered from the intolerance of society for so-called "pedantry." Like Rousseau, the leaders in the Romantic struggle had never felt the yoke of an education which might no doubt develop taste and discretion, but was still more likely to curb vigour and originality: hence

art as they conceived of it was more strongly rooted in realities and even in technicalities than the art of the past—even their prodigious orgies of local colour are not unconnected with the *Ecoles des arts et des métiers*. On the other hand, national education was not slow in creating a new public for the new writers—a public unfettered by the conventions of the past, with a liking for broad, even crude, effects, incapable of appreciating delicate shades of expression—in fact, the public of Dumas père and of Eugène Sue, too often of Hugo as well.

As strong as the influence of Rousseau was that of classical antiquity, as seen through the eyes of Amyot, of Corneille, of Montesquieu, even of Rollin. An interest in the subject had been growing up throughout the past century, showing itself on the one hand in the study of ancient institutions, on the other in the study of ancient art, to which the *Académie des Inscriptions* devoted itself. The second current was by far the stronger, connected as it was with the romance of the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii, with the classical novels and idylls of Fénelon, the Abbé Barthélemy, and Florian. The very fact that the education of its leaders was of the orthodox, classical kind had its influence on the course of the Revolution: it was from their school-days that they drew their recollections of tyrannicides like Harmodius, of law-givers like Lycurgus, of the civic virtues of Sparta, Athens, Rome. Taught by the traditions of two centuries to see resemblances rather than differences in men of all nations and of all ages, they were unable to perceive, as Rousseau had done, that the constitution which had been practicable under a rigid oligarchy could not be imposed on a nation where all men were free and equal.

Classic influence was as strong in art as in politics. The delicate, artificially realistic works of Greuze, of Fragonard, of Boucher were now succeeded by the grandiose compositions of David—*Le Serment des Horaces*, *Les Fils de Brutus*, *L'Enlèvement des Sabines*. In the evolution of the artist-hero of *Les Dieux ont soif*, Anatole France describes the evolution of the art of the time:

“ Dans son atelier s’entassaient, sous une couche épaisse de poussière, ou retournées contre le mur, les toiles de ses débuts, alors qu’il traitait, selon la mode, des scènes galantes, caressait d’un pinceau lisse et timide des carquois épuisés et des oiseaux envolés, des jeux dangereux et des songes de bonheur, troussait des gardeuses d’oies et fleurissait de roses le sein des bergères. . . . Aujourd’hui, bien qu’il n’eût pas encore atteint la trentaine, ces sujets lui semblaient dater d’un temps immémorial. Il y reconnaissait la dépravation monarchique et l’effet honteux de la corruption des cours. Il s’accusait d’avoir donné dans ce genre méprisable et montré un génie avili par l’esclavage. Maintenant, citoyen d’un peuple libre, il charbonnait d’un trait vigoureux des Libertés, des Droits de l’Homme, des Constitutions françaises, des Vertus républicaines, des Hercules populaires terrassant l’Hydre de la Tyrannie, et mettait dans toutes ces compositions toute l’ardeur de son patriotisme. Hélas ! il n’y gagnait point sa vie.”

Furniture and dress were affected in the same way: the eighteenth-century drawing-room, light and dainty, with its gilded, satin-covered chairs, its mirrors, its walls painted with Cupids and doves and garlands of roses, was succeeded by a gloomy apartment, consisting chiefly of Corinthian pillars and masses of mahogany, more or less relieved by fasces and torches. As to dress, we hear of “perruques à la Titus, à la Caracalla, à la Vénus, à l’Aspasie, robes à la Flore, à la Diane, tuniques à la Cérès, à la Minerve, redingotes à la Galatée,” to name but a few of the fashions

of the day. It was not till some years later that one could evolve a tasteful and appropriate costume out of nothing more elaborate than half a dozen yards of muslin and a diamond tiara; but already in *Floréal*, 1793, we read that the *Société républicaine des Arts* met in solemn session to consider a letter from "une mère de famille, désirant se costumer dans le genre antique." The Society did its best; it appointed two of its members, Espercieux and Petit-Coupray, "to approach the wardrobe manager of the Théâtre de la République, in order to provide the citizeness with the means of cutting her material suitably." After this let none say that the Revolution was lacking in attention to detail!

In literature the influence of antiquity, aided very much by the political passions of the moment, triumphed at the expense of that of Rousseau. The effect of the Revolution was to retard the Romantic outburst, and the reasons for this are not far to seek. It has been remarked that a time of revolution in politics or in religion is often a time of conservatism in literature. In England a strong movement towards classicism had marked the close of the Great Civil War; and in this matter at least the French Revolution followed the same course as the English.

Then, too, the Revolution was largely a national movement. The bureaucracy of the *ancien régime* had never really represented the people: the *philosophes* could remain indifferent to the defeats, not of the people, but of the government, during the Seven Years' War, just as later on the *émigrés* found it possible to rejoice at the defeats of Napoleon. But at this time, as well as in the July Revolution, the soul of France awoke to consciousness of itself, and thrust aside, not only the foreign systems of ideas and the foreign fashions popular in the past, but also the exotic literature inspired by them. Britain was

no longer the land of learning, virtue, and liberty depicted by Voltaire and Rousseau, but an

“He coupable, orgueilleuse Carthage.”

Even Roland, writing of scientific research, dogmatically declared: “nous n’avons pas de lumière à attendre de l’Allemagne sur de tels sujets.” One of the most heinous of Mme. de Staël’s crimes, as envisaged by her contemporaries, was that she had allowed herself to be influenced by the *Political Justice* of Godwin, a free-thinker and an Englishman; and, later on, she stood convicted in Napoleon’s eyes of lack of patriotism by the very subject-matter of *De l’Allemagne*. The Emperor himself, in spite of his admiration for Ossian, always spoke with contempt of “les folies germaniques.”

The literature of the Revolution proper consisted entirely in its oratory and its journalism. Of the latter it is unnecessary to speak, for the excellent reason that, apart from the prose writings of Chénier and a page or two of Camille Desmoulins, it never was literature at all; the former was strikingly classical, in matter at least, and pretended to be so in style as well. When Charlotte Corday was executed, Adam Lux glorified her as “greater than Brutus”—to compare her with Joan of Arc did not occur to him. Day by day the Bourbons were execrated as Tarquins, Mirabeau as Catilina; in his pleas for austere simplicity of life and austere severity of justice, Robespierre appealed to the example of Sparta against that of Athens. Camille Desmoulins adapted the most famous page of his *Vieux Cordelier* from a passage in the *Annals* of Tacitus; Napoleon consciously modelled his despatches on the *Commentaries* of Cæsar; Mme. Roland could end a familiar letter with: “Adieu tout court; la femme de Caton ne s’amuse point à faire des compliments à Brutus.”

Everywhere, however, save in the writings of Napoleon, the language which clothes these classical reminiscences is itself anything but classical: vague, emphatic, verbose, declamatory, it is entirely devoid of classic brevity and clearness—Mme. Roland herself has not infrequent lapses into the French equivalent of Johnsonese.

Defective and ephemeral as it was, however, the oratory of the Revolution was not without its direct effect on Romanticism: consciously or not, Hugo himself seems to have been quite strongly influenced by it. *Les Châtiments*, in their fiery energy, in the relentless onward rush of their periods, in the virulence of their invective, weakened often by its very exaggeration, certainly have something in common with the impetuous harangues of Danton, just as many of the sentimental and dogmatic passages in, say, *Les Misérables* or *L'Homme qui rit* recall the more studied and sententious yet equally violent eloquence of Robespierre. In general, too, it is perhaps from the orators of the Revolution that Hugo and most of his school inherited a love of that mode of discussion which prefers similes to syllogisms and appeals to the heart rather than to the head.

It was in the older *genres* that classic (or pseudo-classic) style as well as classic subjects survived. The mere fact that the same writers—M.-J. Chénier and Ducis, Lebrun and Delille, to mention only the chief of a multitude—succeeded equally in tragedy, in lyric, epic, and didactic poetry, proves that they excelled in none. The literature of the time is mediocre just because it is imitative. During the Revolution itself poetry was practically dead: only two of Chénier's poems—and those *poèmes de circonstance*—were published during his lifetime. *La Jeune Captive* and *La Jeune Tarentine*

appeared in the *Décade* and the *Mercure* respectively within a few years of his death, and were admired by two of the makers of Romanticism, Chateaubriand and Millévoxe, the former of whom quoted some fragments of the poet's work in *Le Génie du Christianisme*; but the first edition of his poems—and a faulty one at that—did not appear till 1819, in the days of violent reaction. Under the Convention, the Directory, and the Empire, classical poetry calmly pursued the placid jog-trot of its way.

Lebrun-Pindare continued to live and to pour forth his odes till 1807, destined, like another Waller, to celebrate with equal zeal the Bourbons, the Girondins, Robespierre, and the Emperor. The fabulist Florian, “un La Fontaine doucereux,” perished during the Terror, but his work belonged entirely to the *ancien régime*, the second childhood of which he had enchanted with his prose “idylles” and edified with his prosy fables. Of the descriptive poets, Roucher, author of *Les Mois*, was guillotined in company with Chénier; but the great Delille, “le Virgile français,” returned from his exile in London to become the idol of France, to produce yet more super-didactic works (*Les Trois Règnes de la Nature*, *L'Imagination*, *L'Homme des Champs*), and to occasion by his death in 1813 an outburst of national grief as great as that excited by the deaths of Ronsard and of Hugo. Satiric verse was written not only by André Chénier, but by his brother Marie-Joseph, still remembered for his *Discours sur la Calomnie*, a response to the rumours that accused him of not having done his utmost to save his brother's life.

In the theatre, with its element of greater actuality, with the influences of eighteenth-century Shakespeare-culture not yet passed away, an interesting double current can be discovered. On the one hand are the tragedies of the straitest sect of the Voltaireans, “faultily faultless”

as to versification, daringly allusive as to subject-matter. Such are the *Lucrèce*, *Cincinnatus*, and *Marius à Minturnes* of Arnault, the *Quintus Fabius* of Legouvé, the *Gracchus* of M.-J. Chénier; but the tragedy of real life, enacted day by day, occupied all men's attention, and the faint lustre which these pieces once possessed was only a reflection from the political conflagration. On the other hand, the development of the national consciousness had its effect in causing the evolution of an historical drama, destined to flourish under the Empire and to exert a strong influence on the Romantic theatre, from historical tragedy proper to melodramas like *Marie Tudor* and chronicle-plays like Dumas' *Napoléon*.

The most successful play of this type under the Revolution was the *Charles IX.* of M.-J. Chénier (1789), a violent attack on royalty and the priesthood, which naturally had a *succès fou*, appearing as it did immediately after the storming of the Bastille. Chénier was a true son of Voltaire in his hatred of intolerant orthodoxy and in the untiring zeal with which he attacked it on the stage; but he marks a new step in the evolution of the Romantic *drame à thèse*. Modern as was his thesis, Voltaire in general was cautious enough to embody it in a classical subject, from *Œdipe*, his first anticlerical play, to *Les Lois de Minos*, his last. Chénier, however, not only in *Charles IX.* but also in *Henri VIII.* and *Jean Huss* (both of 1791), dared to deal with the question as it had arisen in modern and to all intents contemporary history. His *Fénelon, ou les Religieuses de Cambrai* (1793), belongs to the same class of historico-political plays, though he himself described it as a *tragédie bourgeoise*; it is interesting, too, as illustrating the hold which the Fénelon legend had obtained on Revolutionary France. *Charles IX.* is worthy of note not only for its subject, but for its *mise-en-*

scène: in a contemporary engraving the actors are shown wearing the dress of the sixteenth century, and attention has obviously been given to the grouping, so that in this way the play may be said to connect Voltaire and Diderot with Hugo, Lekain and Mlle. Clairon with Talma and Mlle. George. Yet Chénier's plays, like those of Voltaire, with which they have many points of resemblance, are not in any way "Romantic," in spite of such superficial innovations as these: structure and versification are more Classic than the whole theatre of the seventeenth century. In any case, it is significant of public taste that one of the most successful tragedies of the period was the uncompromisingly classical *Agamemnon* of Nepomucène Lemer cier.

A word may here be given to the curious little one-act plays which were performed in the minor theatres or even on the boulevards. Literature they are not, yet they have a certain interest as marking the degradation of drama caused by the Revolution, and suggest also a possible source of Romanticism, ranging as they do from demagogic rant to "Gothic" melodrama. There were numerous sketches built round some well-known literary figure: a playlet on Young, for example, shows him lamenting over the corpse of his daughter Narcissa and calling down vengeance on the bigots who had refused it burial—for this apocryphal incident had always been the portion of *Night Thoughts* which won most popularity in France. Then, too, the troubadour fashion left its imprint on the stage. Sedaine's *Aucassin et Nicolette* (1782), an opera with music by Grétry, belongs to the *ancien régime*, but under the Republic there was even a "Théâtre des Troubadours," which seems to have had nothing mediæval about it except its name, while in the year V *Les Troubadours* was produced at the Vaudeville.

With the political squib we descend to the lowest depths. M. Maurice Albert cites as a fair average of the type *Le Jugement Dernier des Rois*. All the contemporary monarchs and statesmen have been transported by the brave Republicans to a volcanic island, the rocks of which are decorated with suitable inscriptions, and which presumably is destined to be engulfed with the tyrants at the end of the act. In prose of an intolerable flatness they upbraid one another's mistakes, uniting only to revile the Convention; the play ends with a free fight between Catherine II. of Russia and the then Pope, who has offered criticisms on her conduct that gain in point what they lose in courtesy. It is not always easy to remember that Talma himself started his career by acting stuff of this kind.

But, in less direct ways, the Revolution did much to prepare the way for Romanticism. Hugo declared that "Le romantisme n'est autre chose que le libéralisme en littérature," and one must at least give the Revolution the credit of having inaugurated *le libéralisme en politique*. Again, a characteristic of Romanticism was its willing reception of foreign influences, first "Teutonic," then Spanish; the Revolution made its influence felt here, by means of the *émigrés* who, with Mme. de Staël at their head, gave a new meaning and a new lease of life to the ideal of cosmopolitanism, by means also of the armies it sent throughout Europe, by means, finally, of the reaction which its hostility towards foreign literatures was bound to provoke. Then, too, the revival of national feeling dates from this epoch: patriotism could not exist at all until the country was a united whole, and it was struck into flame only by the blows of enemies from without. The example of Voltaire (*Abrégé de l'Histoire Universelle*) is

enough to show that without a love of the national past a comprehension of it is impossible. The historical plays of the period are perhaps the first-fruits of this new feeling; later on the mediævalism of Chateaubriand and Hugo on the one hand, the researches of Thierry, Barante, and Michelet on the other, not to mention that most prolific of Romantic *genres*, the historical novel, are all manifestations of the same spirit.

Then, too, it was the Revolution which first produced the most characteristic symptom of Romanticism, *le mal du siècle*. A firm belief in the perfectibility of mankind, in the immortality of the institution if not of the individual, had maintained the *philosophes* in a state of serene optimism, but when this comforting assurance was gone, swallowed up in the universal catastrophe, nothing remained but a hopeless, querulous gloom—for, in comparison with the stoical despair of a Leconte de Lisle, the *Weltschmerz* of the Romantics is querulous indeed. Chateaubriand “raised the cross among the ruins of our altars,” but religion as he conceived of it was chiefly an æsthetic satisfaction, more prone to aggravate *le mal du siècle* than to heal it. The other features of the malady—a feverish desire to act, coupled with an atrophy of the will which inhibits all action; a weariness which, ever seeking something new, is yet convinced that there is nothing new under the sun—are also traceable to the Revolution. A crowded hour of glorious life had been given to the fortunate few, but the many had merely been roused to dreams of fame and fortune just as all was over, and a period of repression and mediocrity was beginning. The twenty years from 1795 onwards were years of apathy after the feverish activities of the Terror. The Jacobins had had all the amusement (if such it can be called)—Sénancour, Constant, Chateaubriand, and many

another, were left to pay the bill. Obermann and René, Julien Sorel and Eugène de Rastignac, Hernani and most of the heroes of the Romantic drama—all these are tainted by *le mal du siècle*. Some it leaves consumed with *ennui*, resigned to inaction, bitterly conscious of their own limitations; others it drives into the deserts of Spain or of the New World, burning with a sense of injury and failure, yet confident in their supreme ability in spite of all; others, again, it turns into sheer beasts of prey, living in society and on society, criminals or “pillars of the State” as chance decrees.

Such was one of the achievements of the doctrine of Liberty; others, equally characteristic of Romanticism, were of a less baneful type. The Revolution had entirely destroyed the old framework of society; there was no room for its fragile graces in such strenuous times: sociability is impossible in a State of which killing is the guiding principle. The *salons* and all they represented were gone for ever, never to be revived by Mme. de Staël, either in the Rue du Bac or at Coppet, nor by Mme. Récamier at l'Abbaye-au-Bois; not even by Napoleon, with the famous garden-parties at Fontainebleau, to which he invited his guests by platoons, and where he drilled them into enjoying themselves as he might have drilled them into forming fours. Society lost in refinement, no doubt, but at least it gained in freedom and in force. And the gain of society was the gain of literature: it was at last freed from that domination of the man in the street and the lady in the drawing-room which had oppressed it more and more since the day long ago when the Comte de Soissons had said to Joinville at Mansourah, “Nous parlerons de cette journée dans les chambres des dames.” The need and the value of such a change may well be illustrated from the words of Mme. de Staël:

“ Les Français jugent les beaux-arts comme des convenances, et les Allemands les convenances comme des beaux-arts. . . . S’il ne faut transporter dans les arts que l’imitation de la bonne compagnie, les Français seuls en sont vraiment capables ; mais plus de latitude dans la composition est nécessaire pour remuer fortement l’imagination et l’âme. . . . Le bon goût en littérature est, à quelques égards, comme l’ordre sous le despotisme ; il importe d’examiner à quel prix on l’achète.”¹

¹ *De l'Allemagne*, ii. 14.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

NAPOLEON AND THE EMPIRE

“ J’AI conjuré le terrible esprit de nouveauté qui parcourait le monde,” wrote Napoleon when, an exile in Elba, he had leisure to contemplate the forces he had set in motion and the destruction he had wrought. If, as we have seen, this “ esprit de nouveauté ” can be traced to far remoter sources, the importance of the Emperor in the development of Romanticism is at least as great as that of the Revolution, the work of which he at once completed and nullified. Of the Empire as well as the Revolution one might say *Silent litteræ inter arma*: both were periods of intense political activity accompanied by utter exhaustion in the realms of literature if not of art, yet both had ultimately the same vivifying effect.

There is a difference, however, significantly expressed in the war-songs of the two periods: in Napoleon’s day the *Marseillaise* is ousted in favour of *Veillons au salut de l’Empire*; for the ideal of liberty, equality, and fraternity is substituted that most unidealistic of motives, *raison d’état*. Napoleon carried on the traditions of the Revolution with regard to the principle of equality: he was, in fact, a living example of its working. He believed in levelling up as well as in levelling down: “ la carrière

ouverte aux talents" was to him more than an effective phrase, and if the privates who actually attained the much-talked-of field-marshal's *bâton* were always few in number and never anything more than his puppets, at any rate they treated on an equal footing with the Kings and oligarchs of the older *régimes*—two of them even became Kings themselves. We have seen that even during the Terror the Jacobins were occupied with thoughts of civil reform. Like them, Napoleon had his schemes for the organisation of law, of the State, of education; like them—and like the Romans, as his flatterers preferred to remark—he built great new roads, and at the same time watched tenderly over the repainting of the parish pump. The Code Napoléon remains a monument for all time, not only to the man who actually formulated it, but to those who, coming before him, had cleared the ground, just as the magnificent conception which gave France a coherent system of education owes as much to the spadework of men like Jean Bon St. André as to the grandiose imagination of the Emperor.

Equality, fraternity, of a practical if not very inspiring kind—these two watchwords of the Revolution were thus the watchwords of Napoleon also; but his hostility to its third great principle of liberty clearly marks the gulf which separates him from the men of '93. Unable to conciliate the old monarchies, faced by an undying hatred which was ever plotting secretly, and ready to break into open revolt when reverses came, he was urged step by step to reorganise Europe on a new and more congenial basis. The framework of civilisation was too narrow for him: then it must be enlarged until it fitted better. The petty German princelings sneered at him as a *parvenu*: then they must learn to tremble before him as a conqueror. Alexander of Russia refused him the hand of a Grand

Duchess: then the Emperor would dictate terms of peace among the ruins of the Kremlin. And this policy was not due merely to his colossal vanity or his ungovernable imagination—both Romantic traits; it was inherent in the very nature of things. The Empire was an anachronism: either it must conform to existing conditions—and this would have involved its extinction—or those conditions must be made to conform to it. Every step onwards led fatally to another, and each was more dangerous than the last. Under these circumstances, the principle of liberty was clearly doomed: at all times it is inadvisable to talk to the man at the wheel, but when one is shooting rapids it becomes impossible. The French nation had suffered enough from the evils of divided control; it was with a sigh of relief that it handed to Napoleon the supreme power and with it the supreme responsibility. It was his business to see that the State came to no harm: the State saved, what mattered the liberty of the subject?

The one motive force of the Empire, then, is the will of Napoleon: it lives only in him, and as soon as his vitalising influence is removed France falls into a stupor so profound that she permits even the return of the Bourbons. On literature as elsewhere, we find the imprint of this imperious personality, and in the case of literature at least this is a matter for regret. It is a fact none the less significant for having been so often pointed out, that the two greatest writers of the period—the only two, indeed, to whom the epithet “great” can be applied at all—were the personal enemies of Napoleon. Chateaubriand, after a short period of support given to the Emperor in his capacity as restorer of official Christianity, broke off all relations on the judicial murder of the Duc d’Enghien. Mme. de Staël, who had been attracted at first by the possibility of making her *salon* the political centre of

Europe, lapsed into open hostility on finding him quite impervious to the charms of conversation—"there was no possible way of talking to him," she decided. Vanity had something to do with the alienation of both writers, yet at the same time it would have been impossible under any circumstances for either to live in harmony with Napoleon: he might well have said of them, as Richelieu said of Corneille, that they lacked "esprit de suite."

Chateaubriand, of course, was far from being an apostle of liberty; it was in the name of the despotism of Church and King that he opposed the despotism of the Emperor. But for the greater part of fifteen years, Mme. de Staël was the very incarnation of the spirit of freedom—and the spirit, one must add, of the Fronde. And Napoleon knew it: hence his unrelenting persecution of her books, while those of Chateaubriand were welcomed with a not unfavourable silence, ready to melt into positive approval at the least encouragement. Lamartine well expressed the difference in their attitude when he described Mme. de Staël as a "conspiration vivante, aussi capable d'amener les hautes intelligences contre cette tyrannie de la médiocrité régissante, que de mettre le poignard dans la main des conjurés"; Chateaubriand, on the other hand, was not "le Dante d'une Florence asservie," but "le Tasse d'une patrie perdue." Yet he saw, too, that though different in kind, their influence was equal in extent and similar in results: "ils furent pour nous comme deux protestations vivantes contre l'oppression de l'âme et du cœur, contre le desséchement et l'avilissement du siècle."¹

[Napoleon, clear-sighted here as elsewhere, deserves the credit of having perceived at once what the Romantics themselves did not discover till twenty years later: "le romantisme en littérature n'est pas autre chose que le

¹ *Premières Méditations*, Préface.

libéralisme en politique." In his youth he had himself written in praise of melancholy and the solitude of the shepherd's hut,¹ and at all times he retained his youthful admiration of Ossian; yet, in spite of these fairly pronounced personal tastes, he saw that the only type of literature possible under the Empire was the type which had flourished under Louis XIV. Classicism was once more *de rigueur*, and if it no longer produced such works of genius as in the past, nobody ventured to annoy the Chief of Police and the Censor by saying so, if, indeed, anyone perceived it.]

The literature of the Empire was naturally machine-made and undistinguished. The good old game of writing tragedies that failed to resemble those of Racine, and comedies that Molière would never have owned, went merrily on. Boileau's odes on the exploits of Louis XIV. were more than equalled by the odes with which the poetasters of the day greeted the exploits of Napoleon, more worthily commemorated in art than in literature. The criticism of the Empire, however, unlike the other literary *genres*, deserves more than a passing mention, so well does it reflect the spirit of the age and show the difficulties against which Romanticism had to fight. At its best, it could have been no more than neutral; in point of fact, sustained by the approval of the Government, it became violently reactionary, imbued by much the same spirit as "the *Quarterly*, savage and tartarly," in England. As Geoffroy put it: "C'est énerver la critique littéraire que d'aller chercher des circonlocutions pour exprimer des défauts qu'on peut très-clairement spécifier d'un seul mot"; and he and his colleagues certainly lived up to his maxim, interpreting it in their own amiable fashion.

¹ Jusserand: *Shakespeare en France*, p. 252.

The *Journal des Débats*, having become by a significant change of name the *Journal de l'Empire*, was the organ of official criticism, with Geoffroy, Hoffmann, Feletz, and Dussault as its principal writers. The Romantics were pleased to describe them as "mummies," but within their own limits they were both clear-sighted and judicious. One can, for example, forgive much to Geoffroy, who maintained against current opinion the inferiority of Voltaire's plays to those of Corneille and Racine, and described *Zaire* as "une tragédie bonne pour faire pleurer les couturières, le dimanche." Yet it was this same Geoffroy who could declare in all seriousness: "Le théâtre français est un théâtre classique: on n'y doit rire et pleurer que dans les règles," and could insist that the whole duty of the poet was "nous émouvoir et nous plaire sans sortir du cercle que l'art lui a tracé."

The criticism of Dussault—in himself a more liberal-minded and less downright individual than Geoffroy—is particularly interesting because it fell to him to proclaim that the theories of Mme. de Staël "would never do." "Cet ouvrage n'est pas français," was his verdict on *De l'Allemagne*. Fouché, it may be remarked, used exactly the same expression—a striking instance of that concord between the critics and the secret police which we have already noted. And again, in the *Annales* he returned to the attack with a perspicacity which could not see the wood for the trees:

"D'où nous viennent ces doctrines? Sont-elles nées parmi nous? Non, ce sont des fruits étrangers, fruits dangereux, véritables poisons, qui ne peuvent que hâter l'extinction totale dont notre littérature est menacée. C'est des bords du lac de Genève, c'est du fond de l'Allemagne, que de nouveaux docteurs ont proclamé ces théories dans un français mêlé de germanismes et dans un style qui sentait le terroir."

Finally, in 1813, on the appearance of Sismondi's *La Littérature du Midi de l'Europe*—which he justly regarded as a pendant to *De l'Allemagne*—he stated exactly the points at issue, and rarely has a critic betrayed so ingenuously his own limitations:

“Les deux partis sont en présence: chacune des deux armées littéraires a ses bannières sur lesquelles sont écrites des devises bien différentes: les noms d'Aristote, de Quintilien, de Cicéron, d'Horace, de Boileau, se lisent sur les étendards des classiques; les drapeaux des romantiques ne portent le nom d'aucun législateur; on n'y voit briller que ces mots: *Ossian, Shakespeare, Kotzebue, genre rêveur, abolition des unités dramatiques, mépris de tout art poétique, nullité de goût*: de quel côté penchera la victoire?”

It is a well-worn quotation, yet it is worth repeating once again: nowhere else does one find so definitely expressed either the prejudice of the “die-hards” of pseudo-classicism or the complete ignorance about their foes which alone made that prejudice possible.

Dussault was at any rate more consistent than most of his contemporaries: the poetry of the troubadours left him as cold as did the poetry of the bards. The fragments collected by Sismondi were, according to him, “a mass of barbaric poetry, the formless productions of unpolished genius,” “the most insipid and wearisome collections which can be produced by the union of indefatigable patience and finicking zeal.” Yet he was forced to admit with sorrow: “Les troubadours sont à la mode aujourd'hui, mais c'est une mode insipide.”

The *genre troubadour* was nothing more than a fashion, as Dussault said, yet it is worth considering, for we find in it the culmination of an antiquarian movement which had been going on in France side by side with the movement to which Percy's *Reliques* belongs in England. That

it did not assume the same proportions as this latter seems due to the fact that it was from the beginning appropriated by the aristocracy, whether of 1780 or of 1816, and hence became suspect to the nation at large. Moreover, ballad literature in England depicted a state of society not too remote from that of the eighteenth century; society in France had become so artificial that the *romance*, in order to be comprehensible, was necessarily artificial also. Of the two currents which go to make up the *genre troubadour*, the Marotic tradition is decidedly more important than antiquarian knowledge.

Yet even under Louis XIV. an interest in local history had managed to survive. In 1706 the Abbé Mervesin published a history of French poetry which gave an account of Provençal literature, while in 1739 the Abbé Massieu produced another which dealt with the *langue d'oïl* rather than the *langue d'oc*. Hence arose yet another of those literary quarrels in which the eighteenth century delighted; *trouvères* and *troubadours* were discussed as fiercely as Ancients and Moderns. The contests of the *Jeux Floraux de Toulouse* were taking place during the whole of this period, keeping alive a little of the old poetic spirit which was to flash out in the *Méridionaux* of the Restoration. None of this work has much value as criticism, and those who "edited" the better-known texts of the Middle Ages usually had some ulterior motive in view. *Les Poésies du Roi de Navarre, avec Glossaire* (1742), and *Aucassin et Nicolette, Amours du bon vieux Temps* (1756), were plainly produced for the benefit of the sentimental rather than the erudite; the Abbé Millot hoped that his *Histoire littéraire des Troubadours* (1774) would serve a moral purpose.

The modern verse written on these ancient models undergoes marked changes in content as the century advances. Before 1750, the Marotic style is used chiefly for *vers de*

société, and has as little depth of feeling as the elegy in the hands of Dorat. With the reign of sentiment and melancholy, the *romances* take on a gloomier tone, and it is comparatively rare to find one in which someone is not either dying or threatening to die. This type leads ultimately to the drawing-room ballad, and according to some authorities has caused a perceptible deterioration in drawing-room music; at any rate it was partly responsible for the vogue of the harp and the guitar a hundred years ago.

But it is under the Consulate and the Empire that the *goût troubadour* attains its zenith. It appears in art, and the Greeks and Romans of David are crowded out of the Salons by Crusaders and pilgrims. It appears in the theatre; no self-respecting melodrama would venture to omit a serenade by the hero. It appears in statecraft; the course of history might have been different if Napoleon had felt less of the glamour of Charlemagne. It appears in the annals of literary forgery; the poems attributed to the fifteenth-century Clotilde de Surville were more popular than any authentic work of the Middle Ages. It appears in the most irreproachable official poetry, that of Fontanes,¹ and Ancelot²; it appears in some of the earliest songs of Béranger. Most typical of all is the work of Millevoye, which will be more fully treated in a later chapter.

Once again, however, the spirit of the *romances* was changing, this time under the direct influence of England and Germany. The poems become less lyrical; they are not a plaint, but a story, of the same type as the English ballad. The transition towards the Scott-worship of the Restoration is rapidly taking place. Soon appears the *romance* of mystery and terror, affected partly by Mrs.

¹ *Le vieux Château.*

² *Marie de Brabant.*

Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis, still more by Bürger; paladins, troubadours, and châtelaines are ousted by hermits, ruins, spectres, graveyards, distressed females masquerading as pilgrims, and all the accessories beloved by the early Romantics.

Yet it seems advisable to insist that while this superficial mediævalism reigned on the surface, serious research was being done by those who paved the way for the great Romantic historians. M.-J. Chénier lectured on the Troubadours in 1807; by the same date Raynouard had begun collecting materials for his monumental work on the poetry of Languedoc and Provence; in 1813 Creuzé de Lesser opened up an even richer mine with his *Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*. There was thus an inexhaustible store of material waiting for the Romantics; and artists and playwrights were as well provided for as poets.¹

All this work was destined to live; the more "literary" productions of the *goût troubadour* were rooted in unreality and quickly withered away. At no period, least of all under the Empire, did the poets take their subject seriously; to them the Middle Ages were chiefly a matter of costume. The state of the language was against them, too; if we find an occasional relic of pseudo-classic diction in the *Odes et Ballades*, what can we expect in the work of Millevoye?

From a literary as well as from a political standpoint, the Empire is thus the strangest mixture of old and new. Napoleon's schemes for reconciling the ideals of the Holy Roman Empire with those of a cosmopolitan Europe are on a par with that eclecticism which accepted the

¹ 1804-05. J. Maillot: *Recherches sur les Costumes, les Mœurs, les Usages religieux, civils et militaires des anciens Peuples*.

1810-1813. Beaunier et Pathier: *Recueil des Costumes, ou la Collection des plus belles Figures françaises*.

most rigid of Classical conventions, and at the same time professed to admire Ossian and the poets of the North. When it is remembered that insincerity, conscious or otherwise, a tendency to pose, a keen sense of decorative effect unaccompanied by any conception of the beautiful, are perhaps the most glaring faults of the period, it is not difficult to reduce to its true importance this cult of a false mediævalism; and the remarks we have quoted from Dussault, a witness whose word carries weight, are enough to prove that under this veneer of Romanticism, Classicism remains unaltered and unyielding. Even the religiosity which followed on the Concordat was superficial: Napoleon, in spite of a Voltairean deism which separated him from the more thorough-going *sensualistes*, was certainly not a Christian. Chateaubriand was under no illusions in the matter, and one can imagine the malicious pleasure he must have felt in inserting in the "*Mémoires*" the following anecdote:

"Bonaparte s'enquit devant Balascheff du nombre des églises de Moscou; sur la réponse, il s'écrie: 'Comment! tant d'églises à une époque où l'on n'est plus chrétien?'—'Pardon, sire,' reprit le Moscovite, 'les Russes et les Espagnols le sont encore.'"

The whole period is in reality given over to materialism, the pursuit of externals: religion, statecraft, victory, defeat, arts, letters, life and death themselves—all are spectacular; the sun of Austerlitz has a good many affinities with the limelight of the theatre. In the foreground are Ney and Murat, the *grogards* of Arcola and the Pyramids, the conscripts of Leipsic, all the heroes of the Grande Armée; but behind the scenes, pulling the strings, coldly calculating profit and loss in terms of hard cash, are the sinister figures of Fouché and Talleyrand. France was rapidly

undergoing the fate prophesied by Mme. de Staël in one of those passages in *De l'Allemagne* to which the Censor quite reasonably objected:

"Oh France! terre de gloire et d'amour! si l'enthousiasme un jour s'éteignait sur votre sol, si le calcul disposait de tout et que le raisonnement seul inspirât même le mépris des périls, à quoi vous serviraient votre beau ciel, vos esprits si brillants, votre nature si féconde? Une intelligence active, une impétuosité savante vous rendraient les maîtres du monde; mais vous n'y laisseriez que la trace des torrents de sable, terribles comme les flots, arides comme le désert!"

The Revolution had left a spiritual void, as Chateaubriand had seen it must do; and this void Napoleon sought in vain to fill with *ossianisme* and mathematics. Lamartine describes with the bitterness derived from personal experience the *orgueilleuse stérilité* of the days when triumphant Arithmetic trod underfoot every idea in Europe, and with its leaden hand gagged the mouth of every thinker; when the "geometricians" who then held sway proclaimed by their actions, if not in so many words, a universal conspiracy against every moral and poetic aspiration.

"Ces hommes avaient le même sentiment de triomphante impuissance dans le cœur et sur les lèvres quand ils nous disaient: 'Amour, philosophie, religion, enthousiasme, liberté, poésie; néant que tout cela! Calcul et force, chiffre et sabre, tout est là. Nous ne croyons que ce qui se prouve, nous ne sentons que ce qui se touche; la poésie est morte avec le spiritualisme dont elle était née.' Et ils disaient vrai; elle était morte . . . en eux et autour d'eux."¹

So much, then, for the influence on literature of the personality and the political *régime* of Napoleon. If they affected the development of Romanticism at all, it was

¹ *Des Destinées de la Poésie.*

only in accentuating the state of things against which it was to revolt, and so strengthening the force of its recoil. But it was impossible that fifteen years of warfare, following as they did on ten of internal convulsion, should have no more direct influence than this, and in fact all the Romantic writers are the product of Revolution and Empire combined.

First of all may be considered the most obvious, though perhaps on the whole the least important, result of the general dislocation of life—its effect on the education of those children who were to come to maturity in the decade from 1820 to 1830. With the Revolution, the classical tradition was broken, and even when order was restored, it never resumed its former sway. In spite of their loudly proclaimed admiration of the heroes of antiquity, the Revolutionaries seem to have had a tendency to regard the writers of antiquity as the private and not altogether respectable property of the Jesuits, who were using them to corrupt the aristocracy. We have seen that the educationists of the time were wholly on the side of the Moderns; under the Empire this tendency became more pronounced, and, as Lamartine complained, mathematics and the sciences claimed an ever more important place—the *polytechnicien* was the typical product of Napoleon's system.

Furthermore, not only was the subject-matter of education altered: it depended on circumstances whether the children of any given generation received a connected education at all. At the most impressionable part of Hugo's life, for example, he was travelling with his family in Spain, "bords où mes pas enfants suivaient Napoléon"; then for three years he attended the School of the Nobles at Madrid; then came another break with the hurried return to Paris when the tide turned in favour of the

English; then his mother's decision to keep him at home at Les Feuillantines instead of sending him to school there. In this particular case one can only be grateful for the succession of fortunate chances which permitted a great poetic genius to expand in the most favourable environment; but it is easy to see that the disjointed nature of their education was responsible for much of the turbulence and irregularity of his contemporaries, *les jeunes France*. In art and in life alike, discipline was unknown to the rising generation, and the spectacle of the Empire, with its unaccountable successes and apparently unmerited failures, was not such as to supply the moral ballast which their education failed to give. Hence we note a decided lowering of all standards: on the one hand we have authors, with Dumas at their head, throwing off every restraint and plunging into those literary orgies, the melodrama and the penny dreadful; on the other, there develops a public nervous, eager for crude sensations, devoid of any critical faculty, which welcomes and fosters this baser side of Romanticism.

When this new-found liberty did not degenerate into licence, however—and only the most insignificant of the Romantics lost their heads completely—its effect on the new literature was as beneficial as it was far-reaching. Like Rousseau, the Romantics escaped the cramping influence of rules and conventions; like him, they substituted for these mannerisms of their own—his style had in it something of the provincial, theirs was full of technicalities and the jargon of the studios.

But in comparison with the other product of Napoleon's wars, this break in the Classic tradition is seen to have only a superficial importance: it influences externals,—but the development of the *mal du siècle* affects the inmost soul of every writer of the day. We have already seen

that the eighteenth century loved a gentle melancholy and found a luxury in woe; and the revival of Christianity did much to accentuate this feeling without changing it in kind. With the Revolution and the Empire, however, and still more during the silence which followed the fall of the latter, melancholy justifies its name—it is no longer gentle or a luxury, but black and hopeless indeed. The catastrophes of the Revolution, the apparent recovery which followed the ever-increasing strain of the constant struggle for security in conquest, Europe in the melting-pot, the fall in a single night of dynasties which had been firmly rooted for centuries, and then the greatest disaster of all, the whole fabric of the Empire crashing down to utter ruin—such spectacles were calculated to produce in those who beheld them a numb despair like that which prevailed at the close of the Middle Ages.

And the generation which was exposed to these shocks was the one more than all others incapable of bearing them with fortitude. In his *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, Musset diagnoses the malady of the age with an insight that is all the clearer because it is his own ill that he is studying. In the days of the Emperor, he says, when every cradle in France was a buckler, “les mères inquiètes avaient mis au monde une génération pâle, ardente, nerveuse. Conçus entre deux batailles, élevés dans les collèges au roulement des tambours, des milliers d'enfants se regardaient entre eux d'un œil sombre. . . . Tous ces enfants étaient des gouttes d'un sang brûlant qui avait inondé la terre; ils étaient nés au sein de la guerre, pour la guerre. Ils avaient rêvé pendant quinze ans des neiges de Moscou et du soleil des Pyramides.” Then, however, came the awakening: talents and ambition were not wanting, but every avenue to success was closed—the war was

over and Cæsar was for ever fallen. "Un sentiment de malaise commença donc à fermenter dans tous les jeunes cœurs. Condamnés au repos par les souverains du monde, livrés aux cuistres de toute espèce, à l'oisiveté et à l'ennui, les jeunes gens voyaient retirer d'eux les vagues écumantes contre lesquelles ils avaient préparé leurs bras."

Finally, as if all this were not enough, there came to deepen still further their despair the influence of Goethe and Byron, two demi-gods, "after Napoleon the greatest geniuses of the century," who, happy themselves, seemed to have devoted their gifts to collecting together all the elements of anguish and sorrow contained in the universe. Then, indeed, there was no limit to the malady of the "enfants du siècle"; with gloomy and silent disgust they absorbed the fatal ideas come from England and Germany—"ce fut comme une dénégation de toutes choses du ciel et de la terre, qu'on peut nommer désenchantement." Standing among the ruins of the past, they doubted of the future—or, rather, they knew that a better day would dawn, but not in their time; they envied even the woes of the unhappiest of their ancestors, who had indeed suffered, yet had possessed a consolation and a hope that their children had lost. "What was, is no more; what will be, is not yet. Seek not elsewhere the secret of our ills."

Just as the more definite influence of the Empire was best reflected in its literary criticism, so the spirit of doubt and despair to which it gave rise is most poignantly expressed in its novels. Benjamin Constant in *Adolphe*, Sénancour in *Obermann*, Chateaubriand in *René*—all describe the *mal du siècle* with which they were themselves afflicted. Sénancour's analysis is the most exact, that of Chateaubriand is decked out with all the devices of his art: Sorrow with him is a queen, as she is a scientist with

Sénancour. The work of Constant, however, which possesses neither the careful detail of the one nor the stormy beauty of the other, is of the three "documents" the one most typical of its age. René and Obermann both win through to an ultimate hope, based on a religion clear as daylight in the one case, a faint though undeniable glimmer in the other; but for Adolphe there is no consolation—curiosity has been the motive force of his life, and with knowledge comes despair. Next, side by side with these three works, we shall have to notice two attempts to escape on the wings of idealism from brutal or depressing realities: on the one hand the extraordinarily large number of gently mournful, mildly optimistic works by amiable if only moderately gifted women writers; on the other, the development of the historical novel under the combined influence of Scott and Chateaubriand.

Such, then, are the chief directions in which the Empire affected literature. Its influence was twofold and apparently contradictory, but Romanticism succeeded in reconciling more than two contradictions in its all-embracing theories. Repression followed by explosion, feverish activity followed by utter collapse: the Romantics knew and expressed both these moods, as well as every possible gradation between them—in fact, they prided themselves on expressing several of them at once.

It remains now to deal in a few words with some minor contributions made to Romanticism by the Empire. [In speaking of the *mal du siècle* we have seen that much of the mental distress of its victims was caused by their morbid sensitiveness to outside influences; this in its turn was due to the individualism which the example of Napoleon naturally engendered. All the Romantics—one may say it without any unsympathetic intention—suffered from an

exaggerated sense of their own importance; like Rousseau, they were so interested in the workings of their own minds that they could not but believe that others would feel the same interest. They had already seen one man revolutionise the whole of the thought of France; now they beheld another shattering the whole framework of Europe. The throne, he told them, was nothing more than four planks of wood nailed together; the personality of its occupant was the only thing that mattered. Hence it was not strange that each of them should believe that his personality too was of supreme importance, that each must be a law unto himself. In so far as society did not oppose this tendency—and on the whole one must admit that it showed itself remarkably complaisant—there arose from it the extreme subjectivity of Romantic literature, its bias towards self-revelation, its contempt of the rules, its clamour for “la liberté de l’art,” which is, according to Brunetière, nothing less than the liberty of the author to be as eccentric as he likes and still find an appreciative audience. And when, on the other hand, society was unexpectedly restive, individualism, thrown back upon itself, produced in literature as well as in real life the Ishmaels of Romanticism—the outlaw or bandit who preys on the world which has refused to accept his claims, Hernani and Triboulet, Antony, Rastignac, Julien Sorel.

Next, the Empire, with its lack of depth and its love of shows and shams, must count for something in the development of another Romantic characteristic: a keen interest in externals. A feeling for physical realism had been growing up throughout the eighteenth century, as we have seen; perhaps the dramatic theories of Voltaire and Diderot, so different in every other way, are the best expression of this revolt against Classical abstraction. Yet they had been able to substitute for it little more than

abstractions of another kind: apart from rare exceptions like Rousseau and Saint-Pierre, Beaumarchais and Chénier, they could give only an arbitrary and conventional picture of foreign lands. Persia and England, Athens and Rome, Central Asia and South America, were nothing more to them than France slightly and patchily touched up. Now, however, the Napoleonic Wars gave authors and public alike a knowledge of the real thing; the lands over which the nation in arms had fought for fifteen years became something more than names, and the gigantic schemes of the Emperor made even India and the East seem close at hand. Local colour comes into its own at last, and if too much importance is attached to it, one can hardly be surprised: it was difficult for the Romantics to paint with discretion from a palette charged with all the colours of the rainbow.

With accuracy in local colour comes accuracy in historical colour also: first-hand reading is here substituted for personal observation, but the result is the same. The "resurrection of the past" was not, indeed, the work of the Empire alone. History as envisaged by Napoleon was very much of the Court circular type, and even his indirect influence is a poor second to the direct influence of Chateaubriand and Scott; yet at the same time we must grant that by creating a more critical spirit in the public his *régime* developed a greater attention to detail in authors.

It is true, in a sense, to say that the Empire encouraged the growth of that cosmopolitan feeling which often goes hand in hand with exoticism. Yet here a distinction must be made: the cosmopolitanism of the Empire, like that of the eighteenth century and unlike the new spirit introduced by Mme. de Staël, looks from within outwards. France is the centre of European thought; any attempt to know the thought of other nations has at bottom a

missionary intention—by showing an intelligent interest in the “foreigner,” one may lead him to bow to France’s intellectual supremacy. Hence we notice a lack of any real sympathy. There is no attempt to gain a new point of view: cosmopolitanism is in the same state as natural history before the theory of evolution, and literary criticism before the principle of relativity. For the Frenchman of the Empire, Germany is the country that provides the imperial armies with beef and beer, and incidentally exports systems of philosophy; Poland is the source of the best light cavalry in the world; Spain deals in brigands and troubadours. All are important only for what they can give to France, and it is material gifts that France demands. The orchestra of Europe must play in unison; Mme. de Staël and the Romantics, on the contrary, would have it play in harmony. In speaking of the cosmopolitan spirit of the Empire, it is thus necessary to make considerable reservations; yet, these limits once set, we can admit that here is one of the sources of yet another Romantic characteristic. The Napoleonic Wars gave knowledge, and knowledge, after all, is a necessary preliminary to sympathy.

CHAPTER II

MME. DE STAËL

It is when we turn to the writings of Mme. de Staël that we realise best how much of Romanticism was latent in the eighteenth century. In many respects she is a typical writer of the age she closes; and in every respect she appeared to her contemporaries as a typical eighteenth-century woman. But it soon became clear to her successors, and to-day, one hundred years after her death, it is manifest, that, disciple of Voltaire and daughter of the intellectuals as she is, she wears her enlightenment with a difference. She developed just those features of eighteenth-century thought which were in accordance with the spirit of Romanticism; those which were not she ignored or boldly denied. And so it is that while she epitomises much of the age that is past, her true place is on the threshold of Romanticism.

That she sums up the eighteenth century is evident from the most superficial examination of her life and works. She is before everything an intellectual, a conversationalist, a woman of the *salons*. Hear her when she is exiled from Paris. Does Nature console her? "J'ai toute la Suisse dans une magnifique horreur," she writes. Can she find an anodyne in travel? "Voyager," she announces in *Corinne*, "est un des plus tristes plaisirs de la vie." So she settles at Coppet, where, though oppressed by the distasteful beauties of Nature, she is visited by admirers

from every country, holds daily court, writes hourly, talks incessantly. Yet it is only when she is able to return to her beloved Paris—in 1795, for example, and from 1797 to 1803—that she values her position as queen of intellectual society. Even in that world of *salons*, the *salon* of Mme. de Staël is unequalled for the number of its adherents.

Enemies and friends alike bear witness to the brilliance of her conversation, which eclipsed even her most famous writings. Authorship, indeed, she only valued as a substitute for society; writing to her was nothing but inarticulate speech. Napoleon feared to allow her within forty leagues of Paris, knowing too well the charm and the danger of her tongue. “Si j’étais reine,” said one of her admirers, “j’ordonnerais à Mme. de Staël de me parler toujours” —a tribute easily understood when addressed to one who said: “Si ce n’était le respect humain, je n’ouvrerais pas ma fenêtre pour voir la baie de Naples pour la première fois, tandis que je ferais cinq cents lieues pour aller causer avec un homme d’esprit que je ne connais pas.” And this, we exclaim, is the woman who stands on the threshold of Romanticism !

Further proofs await us that she was the inheritor of the age of “Enlightenment.” Her ideas are those of the eighteenth century. *De la Littérature* has for its theme the perfectibility of the human race, to be accomplished through Republican methods and institutions. Kant, Turgot, Condorcet, and Godwin, she tells us, have all upheld the doctrine of perfectibility. It is part of the teaching of Christianity, as most enlightened preachers have seen; the only Government that can oppose it is a despotism, the only individuals are those who have never read or thought for themselves. “Le système de la perfectibilité de l’espèce humaine a été celui de tous les philosophes

éclairés depuis cinquante ans; ils l'ont soutenu sous toutes les formes de gouvernement possible."

In religion, Mme. de Staël is by descent a Protestant, but in *Corinne* she brings together fervent Catholics and devout Protestants and allows them to state their cases without making the slightest conscious attempt to defend either cause. In *Delphine* her attitude is one of indifference to religion; though the heroine takes the veil, she does not strike the reader as a religiously minded person. Indeed, she declares in one place that neither religion nor morality can offer solace in trouble. It is no doubt an historical fact that after her father's death Mme. de Staël underwent a "religious crisis"; we know that she read works of devotion; several passages in *Corinne* and *De l'Allemagne* suggest a semimystical strain in her temperament. She devoted a whole section of her greatest work to the religion and "enthusiasm" of Germany. Yet continually in her writings she seems to speak of religion as one outside it—"La religion, cette science de l'âme"; or again: "Le plus pur des sentiments de l'âme." She understands nothing of Chateaubriand's religion.¹ Her ideal is not unlike Rousseau's, largely to be confounded with the sense of the infinite, a vague "hommage à l'Etre Suprême," or that of M. d'Albemar, in *Delphine*—whose creed is belief in God and a hope of immortality—that virtue is synonymous with worship. Whatever it is not, her creed is all-embracing with its complement of indeterminateness; its chief attractions are that it sorts well with the Romantic temperament and conduces to morality. "La lumière et les ténèbres, l'orage et le silence, le plaisir et la douleur, tout inspire à

¹ It is instructive to compare the scene where Delphine makes her profession with the similar scene in *René*.

l'homme cette religion universelle dont son cœur est le sanctuaire."

It is fair, too, to say that Mme. de Staël is of the eighteenth century in her attitude to Nature. We think in this connection of the Comte d'Erfeuil in *Corinne*: "Après avoir passé quelque temps en Suisse, et s'être ennuyé de la nature dans les Alpes"—is any further comment on our author needed? It is true that, although many of her descriptions seem to come straight from the guide-book, she is at times genuinely inspired. But a careful examination of these few passages will suggest that the inspiration is not primarily that of Nature. Ossian is the magician; it is when the majesty of Vesuvius, the vast plains of Russia, the melancholy of the Scottish countryside in winter, or the silent canal scene in Venice, produce impressions which coincide with those of her loved Northern lands that her tongue is loosed, and she breaks from mere description into something indicating feeling. Delphine, in one of these passages, actually couples as the forces which have most influenced her for good the sublime spectacle of the Alps and the heavens, and the songs of Ossian and Thomson. On the whole Mme. de Staël stands aloof from what she sees, describing the cawing of the crows and the song of the birds, the fir-trees, the vines and the mountains—occasionally rhapsodising somewhat coldly with *Corinne* on her native Italy, but remaining for most of her readers the woman whom Switzerland repelled and who would not so much as open her window to catch a first glimpse of the Bay of Naples.

It is a platitude to say that Mme. de Staël is a sentimentalist and a daughter of Rousseau; here she belongs to that great company of "pleurnicheurs" of the eighteenth century which formed the chief link between it and the Romantics. Even if we did not know that Jean-Jacques

had been among her earliest authors, and that her first literary work had dealt with him, we could recognise the great influence which he exercised upon her from the tone of much of her work. The *Lettres sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, the *Essai sur les Fictions*, and the *Traité des Passions*, are almost wholly inspired by him, while *Delphine* and *Corinne*, the latter especially, are full of that peculiar emotionalism which infected the eighteenth-century indeed, but became an obsession with the early nineteenth.

Again, Mme. de Staël is of the eighteenth century by virtue of her cosmopolitanism, but here, too, by her exaggeration of this characteristic, she is a genuine precursor of the Romantics. Since the time of Louis XIV. France had been intellectually the centre of Europe, and through the whole of the eighteenth century she had experienced continual action and reaction with other European countries. There had been the influence of English novelists on French, and *vice versa*, the vogue of English poets and philosophers, even of English educationalists. Voltaire and Montesquieu had brought back ideas from London; Horace Walpole frequented Parisian *salons*; the works of Rousseau and Voltaire had been widely read on our side of the Channel. Germany was repaying France for the influence, first of Boileau, and later of Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, by the correspondence of Grimm, the broadcast dissemination of *Werther*, and the writings of Gessner, who, though little read to-day, enjoyed at this time an almost greater vogue than Goethe himself. Frederick the Great had Voltaire, Maupertuis, and La Mettrie at Berlin, and was instrumental in propagating French ideas in Prussia. Of Italians, Algarotti imitated Montesquieu, Goldoni lived in Paris and wrote many of his comedies in French, while Alfieri, "Misogallo" though he was, owed much to Voltaire and to other French

thinkers. The Spanish Academy imitated the French Academy freely, while Catherine of Russia, who became the patroness of Diderot and was equally partial to the writings of Diderot and Voltaire, wrote and read French with ease.

Mme. de Staël, then, is in one sense no innovator when she boldly takes all the world as her field. Many forces had been at work pulling down the barriers between countries and diffusing ideas which had hitherto been the exclusive property of a single nation. Mme. de Staël, travelled woman as she was, did not content herself with writing vaguely about the places and the people she had visited. She lived in various countries, studied their inhabitants, their customs, their literatures, and their religions; this done, she set to work utterly to destroy the barriers of misunderstanding which others had only weakened, by writing fully of what she knew at first hand, and, above all, by making constant comparisons between other countries and her own, in the fairest and least prejudiced fashion imaginable.

"Les nations doivent se servir de guide les unes aux autres," she wrote in *L'Allemagne*, "et toutes auraient tort de se priver des lumières qu'elles peuvent mutuellement se prêter."¹ In *Corinne* she had already formulated this principle and her characters discuss it freely. The Comte d'Erfeuil, voicing, no doubt, the opinions of many a Frenchman, is strongly opposed to defiling the "taste and elegance of French style" with "la barbarie tudesque, les *Nuits* de Young des Anglais, les *Concetti* des Italiens et des Espagnols." Corinne's point of view, on the other hand, is that "the literary orthodoxy which opposes all innovation is certain

¹ II. 31. She proceeds to justify her statement in the concluding paragraph.

eventually to deaden French literature," while her fellow-countryman Prince Castel-Forte, who has hitherto been silent, breaks out into recriminations against the French, who, he says, are comparatively ignorant of foreign tongues. "Il me semble que nous avons tous besoin les uns des autres; la littérature de chaque pays découvre à qui sait la connaître une nouvelle sphère d'idées." It is not unjust to term the thought underlying these two maxims the fundamental principle of Mme. de Staël's extended cosmopolitanism.

Though she wrote no book on England, she knew the country well, and wrote of it continually and with enthusiasm. Its political state appeared to her almost ideal. The English did in 1688 what the French only accomplished more than a hundred years later; since that time they have steadily progressed towards perfection. Mme. de Staël may be forgiven if, like Voltaire, she pictured herself in this country, a free citizen, untroubled by intolerance and tyranny, and if this picture led her to exaggerate in favour of her ideal.

Our literature, too, appealed to her irresistibly, sharing with that of Germany the first place in her affections. A long chapter in *De La Littérature* is devoted to exposition and eulogy of Shakespeare, whose greatness she recognised in spite of his "longueurs," "répétitions inutiles," and "images incohérentes." She also treats of Otway, Rowe, and other eighteenth-century dramatists, of the novelists who had so greatly influenced France, and of poets, not only like Gray and Pope, but like Spenser and Milton, Thomson and Young. She discusses our language as a medium of literature, our oratory and our philosophy, and spends a considerable time in attempting the thankless task of defining that most elusive English quality, "l'humour."

It is in *Corinne*, however, where she depicts the British character, that she reveals most clearly the depth of her insight. First in Oswald, Lord Nelvil, before travel has broadened his mind and intercourse with Corinne enlarged his sympathies; then in Lucile, his future wife, whose Puritanism and insularity have never been softened by a liberal education; and especially in Lady Edgermond, Lucile's devout but austere mother, we have three types portrayed as faithfully as in life. Oswald learns that Corinne has lived in England—what in the world, then, he exclaims, can have induced her to return to Italy! “*Les Anglais en général,*” explains the authoress at another point, “*sont asservis aux mœurs et aux habitudes de leur pays.*” Hence Nelvil views the “pagan” practices of Corinne's religion with the most marked and chilling disapproval; he makes no effort to understand her lengthy attempts to instruct him. Even when he is thrilled in spite of himself by the impressive scenes of Holy Week in the Eternal City, “*il resta debout*” (we are told) “*pour ne pas professer un culte qui n'était pas le sien.*” After this we are not surprised to hear that he missed in Rome “*les nobles et simples fêtes du culte anglicain.*”

The love of the English for the sea, their practical character, the subordination of women which was carried so far in the early nineteenth century, their indifference to arts and letters, their rigid morality—none of these things escapes Mme. de Staël. But what strikes her most is their love of home, in the fullest sense of this much-used word. The Englishman may for a moment be diverted by foreign customs; when he returns to his country he discovers once more that everything in it is perfect, from its roast beef to its religion. If he travels it is only for his health. He prefers “taking much exercise, following the hounds, and drinking to the health of King George and Old England.”

When abroad he consorts only with Englishmen, and has no commerce with strangers, "not from contempt, but from a kind of repugnance for talking foreign languages, and also from timidity."

The portraits of Lucile and Lady Edgermond at home must have surprised Mme. de Staël's earliest readers more than a little. "Je ne fais aucun cas des talents qui détournent une femme de ses véritables devoirs," says Lady Edgermond. "Il y a des actrices, des musiciens, des artistes enfin, pour amuser le monde; mais, pour des femmes de notre rang, la seule destinée convenable, c'est de se consacrer à son époux et de bien élever ses enfants." We are allowed to be present with Lord Nelvil at Lady Edgermond's dinner-table, where we remark on the modesty and reserve of Lucile, the sober conversation, and the hostess's rather pedantic insistence upon niceties of English etiquette. More instructive still is the scene at family prayers, when all the household, in true English fashion, gather in the hall, Lucile reads a passage of Scripture, and afterwards repeats a lengthy prayer, specially composed by her mother, in which various members of the family are expressly mentioned.

Although, more than once, we suspect the author of an irony as subtle and elusive as anything in Jane Austen, it is only right to say that she does ample justice to the nations she portrays. Germany, of which country she writes in *De la Littérature*, and again, at greater length and from wider knowledge, in her treatise *De l'Allemagne*, is described with equal fairness, and probably with equal insight, though it is so much unlike modern Germany that we read of it curiously rather than critically.

In the Germans of that day she saw an industrious and independent people, whose individuals were distinguished primarily by their placid *bonhomie* and their conscientious-

ness, whose chief defect was an inertness which suggested that they were lacking in national spirit. They have none of that indefinable quality which the French describe as *esprit*, but in its place a prolific imagination, which is apt, however, to lose itself in vague meanderings. This characteristic appears in their music—another national trait, for even the humblest German is at heart a musician, instrumental music being as highly developed here as vocal music in Italy. The natural inertia of the German people is intensified by the atmosphere of stoves, beer, and tobacco-smoke in which they live; their conversation is uninspiring unless it turns on poetical or imaginative topics. “Les Allemands feraient bien de profiter, sous des rapports essentiels, de quelques-uns des avantages de l’esprit social en France.”¹

From national character Mme. de Staël passes easily to the national literature.² She does not find it difficult to account for the comparative ignorance which prevails in France on German literature so recently born. In her earlier book she had eulogised *Werther*, Klopstock’s *Messias*, Schiller’s tragedies, and various other works; she had discussed the German language, defended the German people against those who reproached them for their lack of grace, and admitted freely what she considered to be their principal faults. Now, after eleven years, she still believes most thoroughly in the great qualities of German literature, more especially of the poetry, “la poésie de l’âme.” How notably it contrasts with French poetry of the eighteenth century: “L’on ne dit en français que ce qu’on veut dire, et l’on ne voit point errer autour des paroles ces nuages à mille formes, qui entourent la poésie des langues du Nord.”³ As she looks round on this people with so wonderful a literature, springing from so powerful

¹ *De l’Allemagne*, i. 2.² *Ibid.*, part ii.³ *Ibid.*, ii. 9.

an imagination, she is supremely anxious that it may awake to a consciousness of its greatness.

To introduce German literature to French readers—not modified, as in the past, to suit French tastes, but unabridged and in its proper setting of Germany—this is the aim of the first half of Mme. de Staël's treatise. She first gives a short and inadequate exposition of the principal periods of German literature. Then she proceeds to introduce individuals. Wieland, who writes “dans le genre français,” like many of his compatriots who were dazzled by the brilliance of the Great Age, recalls Voltaire, though he differs from him by a natural depth of intellect and the lack of the eminently French *esprit*. Klopstock has been greatly influenced by Milton and Young; he is nevertheless a German to the core: if poetry were piety, he would certainly be Germany's foremost patron saint. Lessing, drawn more to the English stage than to the French, will only be understood in France by those who can appreciate the German's standpoint. Winckelmann, like Lessing, exercised great influence on art and on literary criticism in his own country. Goethe, who wrote “dans tous les genres,” receives scant notice: but this, says the authoress, is due to his gigantic stature, which no Procrustean methods can overcome. “Goethe pourrait représenter la littérature allemande tout entière; non qu'il n'y ait d'autres écrivains supérieurs à lui, sous quelques rapports, mais seul il réunit tout ce qui distingue l'esprit allemand, et nul n'est aussi remarquable par un genre d'imagination dont les Italiens, les Anglais ni les Français ne peuvent réclamer aucune part.”¹ Not only so, but although every reader must recognise and admire his surpassing genius, he is so distinctively a national writer that no Frenchman may enter the *confrérie* of those who

¹ *De l'Allemagne*, ii. 7.

can appreciate him as he deserves, because none but a German can ever possess the magic password. Schiller (who was destined to have so great an influence in France before Romanticism reached its zenith) is also dismissed with quite a summary notice.

Next follows a section more general in character, devoted to poetry, versification, taste, dramatic art, and—most important of all—the distinctions between “Classical” and “Romantic” poetry. The succeeding pages deal mainly with the greatest works of the dramatists mentioned above, until two chapters on minor writers introduce a final section treating of novelists, historians, and critics. Here we find a eulogistic account of the work of August Wilhelm Schlegel, who for a time was tutor to Mme. de Staël’s sons, and whose influence upon her counted for so much in the influence of Germany. Speaking of his Viennese lectures on dramatic art, she points out how in criticism he exercises his brilliant imagination: “on ne saurait trop le répéter, l’imagination, loin d’être ennemie de la vérité, la fait ressortir mieux qu’aucune autre qualité de l’esprit.”¹ This thoroughly Romantic quality in his criticism, it is suggested, accounts for much of the enthusiasm for his subjects which his lectures have inspired. Particularly is this so with Spanish literature and its hero Calderon: even in his rendering of the sonorous Spanish itself, and still more in the subject-matter of his appreciations, the imagination of his audience was carried away to the orange groves of Grenada and the palaces of the Moorish kings.

Enough has been said to show with what thoroughness the German nation is unveiled before a people which was soon to be more capable of understanding it. Mme. de Staël underlines her exposition, as it were, by contrasting

¹ II. 31.

at every stage the countries of which she writes. On almost every page of *L'Allemagne* the Germans are compared with the French. But this is not all. She illustrates her maxim of the interdependence of nations by comparing all the nations of which she has any knowledge. Thus German music is compared with Italian; German society with English; German education with both English and French. North and South Germany are contrasted as regards manners and temperament, customs and literature; Saxony is compared with Prussia, and Vienna with Berlin. Unfortunately, Mme. de Staël is so much accustomed to making these comparisons in conversation that she often sins through her *penchant* for epigram and antithesis. We cannot but suspect such sweeping statements as: "Les Allemands descendent de la théorie à l'expérience, tandis que les Français remontent de l'expérience à la théorie." And of these there are many. Yet if they provoke criticism, they also invite discussion; and the stimulating effect which Mme. de Staël's comparative method must undoubtedly have had upon her earliest readers would only have been enhanced by these indiscretions.

Corinne has the sub-title *L'Italie*: at once novel and treatise, it is Mme. de Staël's principal contribution towards the furtherance of a knowledge of Italy in France. Pure description has a far larger place in it than in *L'Allemagne*, description decidedly in the guide-book style, of which one can only say that it neither embellishes the treatise nor furthers the action of the novel. Yet this is the harshest comment which can be made on the book as a whole. The comparisons, made dramatically more often than reflectively, are unusually apposite and searching. The criticisms passed by Oswald and Corinne upon each other's countries; Corinne's account of her experiences in

Great Britain; the comments of Oswald, when he returns from Italy, on the habits which prevail in Lady Edgermond's household—all these subserve the evident purpose of showing how the manners of every country must be judged, not absolutely, but as a complement to those of others. As instructive, though less striking than the contrasts between English and Italians, Northerners and Southerners, Roman Catholics and Puritanical Anglicans, are those between the French and the Italians, made as they are by a Frenchwoman of Swiss descent who has travelled in Italy, and is more than a little out of sympathy with the ideas of her country.

The picture which Mme. de Staël presents of the Italian character is so attractive as to lack *vraisemblance*, though no doubt it is coloured to some extent by the figures of Corinne, the virtuous and accomplished heroine, and Prince Castel Forte, Lord Nelvil's unsuccessful rival, whose nobility of character is very prominent. The impression which Mme. de Staël leaves of the Italian is that of an unspoiled child of Nature, loving from the very depths of his heart the pleasures of the country, of art, and of the storied past, yet at the same time an ornament to a society which is renowned for its brilliance. Besides this he is an able business man, an ardent lover, yet sincere and constant when once he has made his choice. He is insensible to applause, and untouched by vanity. His women-folk are allowed to develop their talents more freely than in any other country; there is the same standard of morality for them as for men; their education is liberal and thorough; they never abuse it by affectation or *coquetterie*. The faults of the Italians are but the defects of their qualities. A sunny climate tends to make them indolent; they prefer dreaming to thinking, and are too easily resigned to corruption or tyranny.

A large part of this impression is gathered from the letters and speeches of Corinne, modified occasionally by the criticisms of Lord Nelvil and the reflections of the authoress. One night, however, after dinner, Oswald obligingly leads round the conversation to the subject of literature by the obvious and rather crude device of declaring that England has produced finer poets than Italy. In this way Mme. de Staël presents her readers with a short but effective treatise on Italian literature, together with reflections on tragedy in general and on opera, repeating much of what she has already said in *De la Littérature*, but going into greater detail.

It is characteristic of Mme. de Staël's cosmopolitan tendencies that even when she knows very little of a country she feels impelled to disseminate what knowledge she has. Thus small as was her acquaintance with Italian when she wrote the *Littérature*, her knowledge of Spanish authors was less. Yet she is not deterred from attempting to open up Spain, though in doing so she can only mention Calderon and Lope de Vega, and has to drag in Camoëns from Portugal to fill out her chapter. Still, however much she shows her ignorance, she shows also the true cosmopolitan spirit.

It is not only by her cosmopolitanism that Mme. de Staël foreshadows the Romantic movement. Many of her characters are typically Romantic in spirit. Both Delphine and Corinne are oppressed by a kind of fatalism—"la fatalité de mon sort," as the latter describes it—a vague sense of impending doom which haunts all sensitive souls and can no more be averted than defined. "La fatalité ne poursuit-elle pas les âmes exaltées ? . . . Je ne sais quelle force involontaire précipite le génie dans le malheur." In both novels a large part is played by senti-

ment and emotion; in both the predominating tone is melancholy. Everything is transitory, nothing stays! "Ruines sur ruines, et tombeaux sur tombeaux," cries Mme. de Staël as she describes one scene after another and basks not unwillingly in "the melancholy charm of all that is fleeting." Silence suggests death, and the noise of traffic only intensifies the suggestion by contrast. The dark gondolas gliding over the Venetian canals are like cradles—or tombs—man's first and last resting-places. This kind of reflection is prominent in both the novels, and the reason for it is summed up in one typically Romantic sentence: "Quand une personne de génie est douée d'une sensibilité véritable, ses chagrins se multiplient par ses facultés mêmes. . . . Le malheur du cœur étant inépuisable, plus on a d'idées, mieux on le sent."

Corinne especially is remarkable for the introspection and self-analysis of the principal characters. Nowhere is this melancholy better illustrated than in the character of Oswald—the first Romantic hero of the *école poitrinaire*. Practical, sober, and sensible by nature, he is oppressed by a "profond sentiment de peine," the precise character of which is difficult to determine. Its cause, if we are to believe the author, is his father's untimely death—a fact which we soon forget when we consider his subsequent conduct. Be that as it may, his disposition causes him at first to take no interest in what he sees, makes him indolent and irresolute, petulant at the smallest reverse, and utterly overwhelmed by any real misfortune. When he is ill, he asks that his father's diary shall be read to him, but the reader has after a time to desist on account of "the abundance of Oswald's tears." On his return from Scotland to Italy we are told that speaking Italian makes him feel positively ill. A song of *Corinne*'s moves him to

"unrestrained weeping"; and when she is about to leave him and turns round after addressing to Heaven a silent prayer for fortitude, she finds him prostrate at her feet, "dans des convulsions effrayantes." The cause is simple: "l'excès de son émotion avait surpassé ses forces." This emasculated creature Mme. de Staël describes in perfect seriousness, and the traits of severity in his character which result from his nationality and religion only serve to emphasise his melancholy.

Besides preparing her readers for the Romantic Movement, Mme. de Staël rendered great services to the movement itself by the expression which she gave to certain literary ideas and principles. It is clear that she realised, at least in part, the condition of French literature; she emphasises especially the sad state into which French poetry had fallen and the crying need for its regeneration. "La nation française," she says, with her usual antithetical turn, "la plus cultivée des nations latines, penche vers la poésie classique. . . . La nation anglaise, la plus illustre des nations germaniques, aime la poésie romantique et chevaleresque."¹ The French, in their admiration for classical literature, are unduly bound by rules: "Il y a maintenant trop de freins pour des coursiers si peu fougueux." Nor is drama in a much better state. In comedy, comic opera, and *drame*, the French are indeed unsurpassed, as all Europe will testify. But in tragedy, they are cramped by useless rules and spoiled by unsuitable subjects. The greatest French tragedies, like French poetry in general, have no interest for the people, which, thinks Mme. de Staël, is one of the surest tests of a nation's literary prosperity. How wise was Shakespeare to free

¹ *De l'Allemagne*, ii. 11, one of the most important chapters in the book. (See below.)

himself from the rules which might have bound English tragedy! The only rules which have any value are the *règles du goût*, for these are not only restrictive, but constructive.

Poetry in the usual sense (continues Mme. de Staël), thanks largely to the tyranny of the Alexandrine, is dead: "Nos meilleurs poètes lyriques, en France, ce sont peut-être nos grands prosateurs, Bossuet, Pascal, Fénelon, Buffon, Jean-Jacques, etc."¹ She believes profoundly in the necessity for inspiration, which must work out its own methods independently of precepts. "Le génie se sent comme l'amour, par la profondeur même de l'émotion dont il pénètre celui qui en est doué."²

So much is criticism, but she reconstructs as well. She is the first French writer to employ the word "romantic"—not, indeed, precisely in the sense which it took at a later date, but in a sense which is very similar. In the eighteenth century *classique* was equivalent to a term of praise, while *romantique*, like *romanesque* and the eighteenth-century adjective "Gothic," meant something irregular and fanciful, verging even on absurdity. Mme. de Staël, with a stroke of her pen, changes these connotations entirely. "On prend quelquefois le mot classique comme synonyme de perfection. Je m'en sers ici dans une autre acception, en considérant la poésie classique comme celle des anciens, et la poésie romantique comme celle qui tient de quelque manière aux traditions chevaleresques."² In the celebrated chapter of *De l'Allemagne* entitled *De la Poésie Classique et de la Poésie Romantique*³ she proceeds to justify what is patent throughout her works—her preference for romantic over classical poetry.

¹ *De l'Allemagne*, ii. 9: "Du Style et de la Versification dans la Langue Allemande"—another important chapter.

² *Op. cit.*, ii. 11.

³ ii. 11.

In *Corinne*, under the thin disguise of her heroine, she makes a distinction and a confession which go to the root of the matter. "Il n'y a que deux manières très distinctes de sentir la nature: l'aimer comme les anciens, la perfectionner sous mille formes brillantes, ou se laisser aller, comme les bardes écossais, à l'effroi du mystère, à la mélancolie qu'inspirent l'incertain et l'inconnu. Depuis que je vous connais, Oswald, ce dernier genre me plaît." So speaks *Corinne*, but Mme. de Staël had made up her mind long before she conceived her heroine. The vague and vast suggestiveness of Ossian is to her the most perfect form of literature, and she persuades herself, in poetry as in politics, that her ideal is a democratic one. "The poetry of the people is the poetry for the people" is her motto in modern form. "Ces poésies (*i.e.*, classiques) d'après l'antique, quelque parfaites qu'elles soient, sont rarement populaires, parce qu'elles ne tiennent, dans le temps actuel, à rien de national."¹ She sums up as follows: "La littérature romantique est la seule qui soit susceptible encore d'être perfectionnée, parce qu'ayant ses racines dans notre propre sol, elle est la seule qui puisse croître et se vivifier de nouveau: elle exprime notre religion; elle rappelle notre histoire; son origine est ancienne, mais non antique."²

Mme. de Staël did more for the Romantic movement, however, than merely popularise a name. She did what might be supposed to follow from her cosmopolitanism and her "romantic" fervour in drawing a sharp and striking contrast—always striking, but sometimes too sharp—between the literatures of Northern and Southern peoples. Was it Rousseau's dictum "que les langues du Midi étaient filles de la joie, et les langues du Nord, du besoin," which first suggested this contrast to her, or was

¹ *Op cit.*, ii. 11.

² *Ibid.*

it evolved from her reading and travel alone? Which-ever it may have been, she is continually forcing the contrast upon her readers, and pointing to the literatures of the North—notably of England and Germany—as the source whence France must draw new life for the future.

The contrast is begun in *De la Littérature*, written in 1800, when she knew but little of either Italy or Germany. Yet even here she is a convinced partisan of the North; the Ossian poems she knows well and believes to be authentic; German folk-poetry is the purest gold to her. She contrasts Homer with Ossian—two poets whom she considers as the sources of Southern and Northern literatures respectively;¹ Petrarch with Thomson, Anacreon with Gray, to the great disadvantage of the Southerners. That they alone have anything approaching perfection of form is a small consideration; what she demands of poetry is sentiment, melancholy, reflectiveness; Shakespeare and English poets in general have “learned all the secrets of pain.”

In her later book *De l'Allemagne*, Mme. de Staël draws further conclusions; the gulf which she has fixed between the two types of literature becomes broader and more significant. It broadens into the very ocean which separates the “Classic” from the “Romantic.” Over and over again it takes a new significance, as Mme. de Staël sees in the Northern literatures traits which the Romantic leaders ultimately gave to the French.

That the drama should be freed from rules,² for example,

¹ A note (*Litt.*, i. 11) explains, however: “En appelant Ossian l'origine de la littérature du Nord, j'ai voulu seulement l'indiquer comme le plus ancien poète auquel on puisse rapporter le caractère particulier à la poésie du Nord.”

² See principally ii. 15, *De l'Art Dramatique*, and following chapters.

—one of the first claims in which Mme. de Staël anticipates her successors—is directly suggested to her by the independent spirit of Germany. She declares that her opposition to classicism applies as much to drama as to any other *genre*. Of the much-discussed Unities, only the Unity of Action is important; the others are puerile and useless. It is a poor drama which loses in verisimilitude by shaking off such artificial restrictions; in the Northern countries the essential truth of the drama is preserved by realistic language, character study, and the use of local colour. Freedom from the periphrasis is another of her claims: the *mot propre* has its place in poetry as much as in prose. Yet in the verse of her day “On ne peut dire en vers alexandrins qu’on entre ou qu’on en sort, qu’on dort ou qu’on veille, sans qu’il faille chercher pour cela une tournure poétique.” Freedom in choice of subject (another plank in the Romantic platform) is equally insisted on in the chapter on Dramatic Art. Voltaire’s “Modern” tragedies, we are told, are quite as effective as any Greek or Roman play. Freedom from the toils of the Alexandrine (was it not Victor Hugo who boasted of having “dislocated” it?) is greatly to be desired. How can genius eternally climb “the barriers of hemistich and rime”? “Racine est le seul écrivain qui, dans la scène de Joas avec Athalie, se soit une fois joué de ces difficultés: il a su donner une simplicité aussi noble que naturelle au langage d’un enfant; mais cet admirable effort d’un génie sans pareil n’empêche pas que les difficultés trop multipliées dans l’art ne soient souvent un obstacle aux inventions les plus heureuses.”¹

Another claim made by Mme. de Staël which reappears in the Preface to *Cromwell* is the superiority, whether in

¹ *De l’Allemagne*, ii. 13.

drama or in any other *genre*, of mediæval and modern to ancient subjects, of Christian history to pagan mythology. "Les sujets grecs sont épuisés. . . . La tendance naturelle du siècle, c'est la tragédie historique." The theatre is a national possession; its aim is to purify and ennoble the spectator. Can we not, like the Northern peoples, be interested in our own history? Can we not be moved by the rites of our own religion, that we should have continually before us the pagan ceremonies of the Greeks? There is no truth (she continues) in Boileau's dictum that the dramatising of religious subjects gives an air of fiction to truths of Christianity. Klopstock, to name only one author, has treated numerous religious themes, both in epic and tragedy, without a suggestion of irreverence, and shown that Providence enters as appropriately into tragedy as Fate. Further, Mme. de Staël finds in stories of chivalry much graceful yet simple language, and a *naïf* charm which is totally absent from Classical plays. Her plea for the "intérêt pittoresque du moyen âge," though she does not elaborate it, suggests to the reader yet another merit of the modern subject.

Lastly, Mme. de Staël lays down the principle that the literature of a country, to fulfil its proper function, must reflect the life of the people, and appeal to all classes. Every other country but her own, she finds, can boast this of the works of its greatest men. The boatmen at Venice know stanza after stanza of Tasso; the works of Calderon and Camoëns are familiar to all in Spain and Portugal; Shakespeare is read and representations of his plays are witnessed by the lowest classes in England; popular poetry has reached its zenith in Germany. And yet in France our greatest literature is aristocratic, produced at a time when the people were as so much dust, bounded by arbi-

trary rules imposed by an autocratic power. Better that our haughty tragedy should descend to melodrama than that it should fail to appeal, as it does at present, to Frenchmen of every class !

The wish was fulfilled, to the letter. Romantic tragedy did appeal to every class, and it did, with equal certainty, descend to the depths of melodrama.

CHAPTER III

CHATEAUBRIAND

THE most obvious device to employ in writing about Mme. de Staël and Chateaubriand is to contrast them. Many writers have succumbed to the temptation, and, in doing so—as which of us does not in a similar case ?—have fallen into Mme. de Staël's own error of exaggeration. The result is that both Chateaubriand and Mme. de Staël have been subjected to that worst of posthumous misfortunes—the injustice of being “labelled.” Mme. de Staël has been made to stand for Theory, Chateaubriand for Practice. The one has been called a sceptic, the other a Christian apologist. On Mme. de Staël is bestowed the adjective “masculine” for the sake of bringing out the “femininity” of Chateaubriand. Mme. de Staël, again, has been styled pre-eminently a speaker, while Chateaubriand is termed a writer born. Once more, Mme. de Staël is said to have clearer ideas, Chateaubriand vaster ones, though more confused. All such antithetical statements, however, can easily be investigated by the reader who has the smallest acquaintance with the works of both authors. A claim which deserves more attention is that which links Mme. de Staël to the century just past and Chateaubriand with the century to come.

It has already been seen how much Mme. de Staël had in common with the eighteenth century, and yet how travel, reflection, and the march of events combined to make

her a true precursor of the Romantics. An eighteenth-century woman she remained at heart, by whatever criterion we may judge her. Chateaubriand, on the other hand, is of the new age, and of that age alone. For the first few years of his literary life, it is true, he appears as a sceptic in religion and a dilettante in eighteenth-century philosophy. But this was not to be his permanent state of mind; it is not even an example of the contradictory whims of genius. It was a perfectly sincere position; but after the spiritual crisis caused by the deaths of his mother and sister, there followed a psychological reaction which not only developed his true nature, but engendered in him a thorough repulsion from encyclopædism. In spite of the passages in his *Mémoires* and elsewhere which are constantly cited as examples of *spirituel* writing, he seems incapable of appreciating writers who are especially remarkable for *esprit*. Voltaire is anathema to him, though he takes a perverse pleasure in quoting passages of Voltaire which seem to favour Christianity. Even for Rousseau, although he had much in common with him, Chateaubriand has little more admiration. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre appeals to him as a writer; and to-day, as we look back on these two writers, Chateaubriand's praise of *Paul et Virginie* illustrates surprisingly the sympathy between them: "Il est certain que le charme de *Paul et Virginie* consiste en une certaine morale mélancolique, qui brille dans l'ouvrage, et qu'on pourrait comparer à cet éclat uniforme que la lune répand sur une solitude parée de fleurs."¹

In politics as in literature, Chateaubriand despises and condemns the century which has just closed behind him. His temperament and his ideas are those of an aristocrat. A republic forms no part of his political ideal; a theoretical

¹ *Génie du Christianisme*, pt. ii., bk. iii., ch. vii.

republic like Rousseau's is to him foolishness. The cries of Voltaire against intolerance, of Beaumarchais against social tyranny, have no meaning for him; he is a partisan of the old order. The hopes and beliefs which animated so many minds in pre-Revolution and Revolution days have no place in his creed: he is a pessimist and a sceptic, in politics though not in religion.

Let us leave abstractions for a moment and examine this figure which looms so large on the threshold of the opening century. It is the figure of a melancholiac—the term is hardly too strong—melancholy by birth and by temperament, melancholy by preference, and made more so by the force of circumstances and a certain morbid pleasure which the contemplation of his own melancholy afforded him. He is sensible to a degree unsurpassed by any hero of fiction: the most ordinary rites of religion affect him profoundly, and he is susceptible to the slightest stimulus of nature. His sadness is coupled with pride, which reaches the extreme of vanity, causes him to exaggerate his talents as to a smaller degree Victor Hugo did, and makes much of his work extremely self-conscious. He has no scruples against posing, writes to the gallery without hesitation, and plagiarises wherever expedient. He loves to wander, and roams over a great part of the world. He has strong convictions, in politics not always reconcilable, but in religion, from the time of his conversion, quite unshakeable.

That his religious convictions, when once formed, were sincere we for our part have not the slightest doubt. Violent reaction often reveals a man's true nature, and the very fact that Chateaubriand veered with so many political winds, but remained consistently loyal to the Church, speaks of itself for the reality of his faith, however little reason there may have been behind it. *Vaniteux* and

poseur as he was, there is little of either quality in the dullest parts of the *Génie*; why, then, did he write them, if he were not sincere? Yes, says the critic, but he tells us that he went to the East from religious motives, and then again that he went in search of the picturesque. Which statement are we to believe? The answer is simple: Believe both, for to Chateaubriand they are one. He is sincere when he says that his journey completed his artistic studies—sincere, too, when he takes as his motto:

“ Qui devoto
Il grand sepolcro adora, e scioglie il voto.”

Yet in the next moment we eye somewhat askance his half-boastful claim that he is making himself a fool for the sake of the Cross. “Je me suis rangé depuis longtemps dans la classe des superstitieux et des faibles. . . . (mais) *du moins la foi me reste!*”¹

It is dangerous with such a man, however avowedly subjective his writings may be, to read his own character into that of any one of his heroes. But it is quite clear that a great part of René’s description of himself applies, and was meant to apply, equally well to Chateaubriand:

“Un jeune homme sans force et sans vertu, qui trouve en lui-même son tourment et ne peut guère se plaindre que des maux qu’il se fait à lui-même. . . . Tour à tour bruyant et joyeux, silencieux et triste, je rassemblais autour de moi mes jeunes compagnons; puis, les abandonnant tout à coup, j’allais m’asseoir à l’écart pour contempler la nue fugitive ou entendre la pluie tomber sur le feuillage. . . .”

Amélie, René’s sister, who roams the forests with him and is his chief companion, represents, without the slightest doubt, the author’s younger sister Lucile. And the

¹ *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem.*

reflection which he makes upon their characters is perhaps the key to much in his own: " Nous avons tous les deux un peu de tristesse au fond du cœur; nous tenions cela de Dieu et de notre mère."

Such a man, so typically a Romantic and so evidently of the nineteenth century, was well fitted by his character to introduce a Romantic literature into France. It will be seen from what follows that he was no less so by his gifts as a literary artist.

Chateaubriand's contributions to Romanticism were so numerous that nothing more than the barest outline of them can here be attempted. They are contributions no less to the theory than to the practice of Romanticism; and this double-sidedness of Chateaubriand's work must place it in importance above Mme. de Staël's. For, unlike her, he was a great artist; and he gave of his best.

René ranks with *Werther* as one of the most characteristic products of the evolutionary period of Romanticism, the hero of *René* as the purest example of the *mal du siècle*. His melancholy is not spasmodic, nor is it by implication half physical, nor, as with Oswald in *Corinne*, is it contrasted with an otherwise practical and sensible nature. It is inborn, on the contrary, as Chateaubriand's itself was. From the beginning of the story, *René* is destined, as the least sympathetic reader knows, to be the leading figure in a lachrymose tragedy, and this not merely because of an unseen Power which wills it so, but from his very nature, against which no fortunate combination of events could have any power, even were the scene of the drama laid in the Earthly Paradise.

Just as the *poitrinaires* are liable at any time to swoon or to develop sudden illnesses of the vaguest description, so victims of the *mal du siècle* have an unbounded capacity

for falling into reveries or fits of depression. The smallest natural object—a pond, a rock, even a fallen leaf—will start in them a train of melancholy thoughts. Sadness is their natural state; there are occasions, it is implied, when it is almost indecent to be anything else but sad. Further, there is a subtle connection between the melancholy of the Romantic hero and his religion, the link between the two being, of course, the contemplation of Nature. It is noteworthy, then, that the hero of the *Abencérage*—for all Chateaubriand's heroes have much in common with René—has “le cœur saisi de tristesse et de religion”; that a long passage in *Atala* attempts to prove that sadness was ordained for the common lot of mankind; that the heroine of *Atala*, as she sleeps in death, is described as if “enchantée par l'Ange de la mélancolie et par le double sommeil de l'innocence et de la tombe.” But the final reflection of *Atala* sums up the author's conception of life in words which more than one of the Romantics might have taken as their motto: “Homme, tu n'es qu'un songe rapide, un rêve douloureux; tu n'existes que par le malheur; tu n'es quelque chose que par la tristesse de ton âme et l'éternelle mélancolie de ta pensée !”

How far may this be said of René, the character who, after all, accounts for a great proportion of Chateaubriand's influence? Certainly, from the beginning of his life, he has had good reason for his “penchant mélancolique,” for his birth cost his mother's life, and he was brought up by strangers. It is his own experience which has taught him to believe that “le chant naturel de l'homme est triste, lors même qu'il exprime le bonheur.” He avoids society, hating, like Rousseau, the so-called amenities of civilisation. He loves to sit for hours in solitary thought. When he compares the calm of Nature with the agitation and unrest of his own soul, it is to blush

indeed, but not to make any effort to throw off the heaviness which oppresses him. For this heaviness is part of himself; what weighs him down is "une surabondance de vie." And, further, his melancholy affords opportunities for introspection; he would not shake it off if he could.

"La solitude absolue, le spectacle de la nature me plongèrent bientôt dans un état presque impossible à décrire. . . . Toutefois, cet état de calme et de trouble, d'indigence et de richesse, n'était pas sans quelques charmes." What are the charms? One, we are told, was to pick to pieces a willow branch by the riverside and to philosophise, Hamlet-like, on each leaf the stream carried away with it. "O faiblesse des mortels ! ô enfance du cœur humain qui ne vieillit jamais ! voilà donc à quel degré de puérilité notre superbe raison peut descendre ! Et encore est-il vrai que bien des hommes attachent leur destinée à des choses d'aussi peu de valeur que mes feuilles de saule."

He prefers darkness to light, and the dimness of the twilight to either. Autumn, it would appear, is his favourite season: "J'entrai avec ravissement dans les mois des tempêtes." He enters a church to meditate: the worshippers genuflecting before the altar leave the place with an expression of peace and serenity upon their faces. Not so René. He sheds floods of tears and prays to God that the burden of melancholy—of life—may be taken from him, but he goes out in much the same state of mind as when he entered. Nor would he have it otherwise; he leaves the church to contemplate the glories of the sunset, and the same half-voluptuous, half-spiritual process begins once more.

The melancholy of *René* and the other imaginative tales is reinforced by their emotionalism and sentimentality. *Atala*, *René*, *Les Natchez*, *Le Dernier Abencérage*—they are every one tragic in their conclusions, and all except the last

are semi-tragic in tone. The heroes are as ready to burst into tears as to fall into reveries. "Voyez les pleurs qui coulent de mes yeux," exclaims René with breaking voice and stammering speech. Eudore speaks to Cymodocée of the goodness of God: "Cymodocée se découvre le visage: elle aperçoit la noble figure du guerrier inondée des pleurs qui descendaient le long de ses joues brunies."¹ Even the warrior Aben-Hamet, who has little in common with the Romantic hero, becomes "toujours plus ému" as he learns that his lady-love's relatives are his hereditary foes. At last he can bear the strain no longer. "To the astonishment of the onlookers," observes Chateaubriand with some lack of humour, "Deux torrents de larmes coulèrent de ses yeux sur le poignard attaché à sa ceinture." True, the warrior apologises a moment later, and promises to shed the remainder of the tears in private, but no apology, surely, could atone for so unseemly a spectacle!

But it is less the emotions of the various heroes than the general emotional tone of Chateaubriand's work which makes the melancholic effect of the tales much greater than it would otherwise be. This tone is everywhere: pervading the author's reflections, colouring his descriptions, latent in his delineation of characters. He assumes also an emotional sympathy in his reader, and to his subtle suggestive stimulus his readers responded—and still respond—without suspecting that the author's mental attitude has been foisted upon them also. No one would dream of criticising René as he criticises the sentimental lovers in *L'Astrée*, the leading actors in the comedies of La Chaussée and Diderot, or even Mme. de Staël's prosaically conceived, though skilfully executed, character of Oswald.

Hence, then, the influence of *René* upon succeeding writers.

¹ *Les Martyrs*.

Side by side with the service which Chateaubriand rendered to Romanticism by the development of emotionalism and melancholy must be placed his equally valuable work of restoring the Christian religion to an honoured place in literature. One of his principal objections to the eighteenth century was that in its blind intellectuality it treated religion as barbarous because it was irrational. Even where religion was found in literature, it was not Catholicism, nor even Christianity, but a vague Deism which amounted to little more than Nature-worship. And if some author had chanced to be among the faithful, he would not have dared, in the face of Boileau's dicta and the practice of the age, to give his religion a place in his writings. In Bernardin de Saint-Pierre alone did Chateaubriand find, besides the "morale mélancolique" which gave his best-known book its peculiar charm, a due recognition of Christianity, evidences of wide reading both in the Bible and in the Lives of Saints, and the endeavour "à justifier les voies de Dieu et à prouver la beauté de la religion."

It was no doubt Chateaubriand's own religious convictions which caused him to give so large a place in his work to Christianity. But he sought to justify this departure by representing as the motive of it the superiority of modern over ancient inspiration and the failure of mythology in the past to do what had been claimed of it. There is little love of Nature, he says, in the poetry of antiquity, few truly descriptive passages, and little sign of any real "feeling" for natural beauties, because everything had become conventionalised and therefore unreal.

With the advent of Christianity, poetry threw off the chains of convention, and Nature was revealed in its simplicity and grandeur as the work of God. To be alone in Nature was to be alone with God—something no longer

fearful, but full of delight. "La religion chrétienne est essentiellement mélodieuse, par la seule raison qu'elle aime la solitude. Elle est un peu étrangère sous les toits des hommes; elle aime mieux les forêts, qui sont les palais de son père et son ancienne patrie."¹ It is with no idea of incongruity, but with the deepest sense of its fitness, that Chateaubriand introduces into *Atala* the celebration of Mass in Nature's Temple. For it is in Nature's temple, he says in the *Génie*, that Christianity best lifts up her voice to the heavens. "La nature publie sans cesse les louanges du Créateur, et il n'y a rien de plus religieux que les cantiques que chantent, avec les vents, les chênes et les roseaux du désert."²

The new poetry which Christianity introduced, says Chateaubriand, was truly descriptive, and devoid of all artificiality, a fact which recommended it to Ronsard and his school, but caused his successors to banish it. Now it is regaining its place in French literature, thanks largely to Pope and to Thomson's *Seasons*. It is to Christianity that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre owes nearly all his skill.

Chateaubriand further contends that the gods of mythology and all the pagan machinery are inferior as instruments of poetry to those of Christianity. God Himself, the saints and the angels, the spirits of darkness, Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, are discussed in turn, Dante, Tasso, Milton, Racine, and other Christian writers being called as witnesses. We are then invited to consider the excellence of the Bible, regarded as literature, and to compare it with Homer, greatly to the latter's disadvantage. The conclusion of the whole matter appears to be this: "Tout est grand avec Dieu, tout est petit sans Dieu."

¹ *Génie du Christianisme*, pt. iii., bk. i., ch. 1.; *La Musique*.

² *Ibid.*

This bare outline of the exposition which Chateaubriand gives in the fourth book of the *Génie du Christianisme* is sufficient to show the absolute denial which he opposed to one of the principal tenets of Classicism. But not content with defending the introduction of Christianity into literature, he has left also a monumental defence of the Catholic religion.

His is a poetic nature, a mind continually filled with images, and with little room for real reflection or logical argument. It is not surprising, then, that the theology of Chateaubriand's *apologia* is of less value than its poetry. He is concerned to show, not the "truth," but the "beauty" of Catholicism, though, being one of those who hold the misleading doctrine that "beauty is truth, truth beauty," he probably regards the two as almost identical.

A few examples will suffice to illustrate his point of view. When he describes the great Sacraments of his religion—the Eucharist, Baptism, Confirmation, Orders, Matrimony—he introduces each chapter by nothing more serious than a pen-picture. There is the neophyte in the waves of Jordan, receiving baptism from the hermit in the shadow of the cedar-trees. Or there are the boys and girls, decked with spring flowers, making their way along the road to the church where they are to receive their Maker. Or again, there are the illustrations which Nature affords of the beauty of the virgin state, the long descriptions of ceremonies and the neglect of vital points of doctrine, the emotional tone-colour in the account of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Again, in the section of the book devoted to *Beaux Arts* we may note the importance which the author attaches to music in religion. Or, once more, take the very sub-title of the book—*Les Beautés de la Religion Chrétienne*—and remark the number of times the

author makes it plain that it is "la beauté" which attracts him to religion, and that he holds his religion, so to say, pictorially. "Nous avons déjà fait remarquer *la beauté* de ce septième jour" (le dimanche), is one of his typical phrases.

He is the staunchest adherent to the *Autel*, the most firmly convinced of the infallibility of Catholicism. Everywhere he is lost in wonder at the prescience of the Church, "la prudence qu'elle seule possède," "sa sagesse accoutumée," "la pureté de notre religion." "L'Europe doit . . . à l'Eglise le petit nombre de bonnes lois qu'elle possède. . . . Quel vaisseau pourtant que cette Eglise ! qu'il est vaste, qu'il est miraculeux !"

Though the *Génie du Christianisme* is Chateaubriand's masterpiece, his purely imaginative works are equally impregnated with religiosity, and often with the spirit of true religion. Into each of his plots Christianity has found its way: René's sister takes the veil, and this is the climax of the narrative; the story of *Le Dernier Abencérage* turns on the conversion of the hero to Christianity; the *Martyrs* is a Christian epic. The emotion which lends such effect to the melancholy of the characters is brought to bear with even greater force upon the scenes into which religion enters. The circumstances connected with Amélie's profession, especially the scene in the church, the death-chamber of Atala, the visit to the Cross and the Tomb, and the picture of the ancient mosque converted into a church—these are among the very finest examples of the kind in the language. Style, imagery, and emotion blend in them to enhance the effect of situations already sufficiently striking. René, of Chateaubriand's heroes, has most of his creator's religiosity. Listen to the effect of the distant church bell upon him as he sits in the forest in meditation:

“Appuyé contre le tronc d’un ormeau, j’écoutais en silence le pieux murmure. Chaque frémissement de l’airain portait à mon âme naïve l’innocence des mœurs champêtres, le calme de la solitude, le charme de la religion et la délectable mélancolie des souvenirs de ma première jeunesse ! Oh ! quel cœur si mal fait n’a tressailli au bruit des cloches de son lieu natal, de ces cloches qui frémirent de joie sur son berceau, qui annoncèrent son avènement à la vie, qui marquèrent le premier battement de son cœur, qui publièrent dans tous les lieux d’alentour la sainte allégresse de son père, les douleurs et les joies encore plus ineffables de sa mère !”

It need hardly be said that the weakness of Chateaubriand’s defence of Christianity lies in its preoccupation with what is unessential and his comparative indifference to the fundamental verities, whether of the theory or the practice of religion. It is true that in certain sections of the *Génie* he makes some attempt to treat of theology, and that in *Atala*, and occasionally in some of the other *nouvelles*, there are glimpses of a practical religion. But on the whole it is fair to say that Chateaubriand’s master-work, whatever its value to Romanticism, has been of little service to Christianity, and his own boast, that where Mme. de Staël saw perfectibility he saw Jesus, must not be taken as more than the expression of a pious sentiment.

But the influence on Romanticism of his treatment of religion can hardly be over-estimated. The linking of Nature, not with a vague natural religion, but with Catholicism itself, was something as yet unattempted on such a scale ; and its effect was enhanced by the combination of this religion and the melancholy of the Romantic hero, and the steeping of both in the subtle emotionalism which was so essential a part of the Romantic temperament.

In his treatment of Nature it is usual to compare Chateaubriand with Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who, as we have

seen, was before all else a painter, and who as far surpassed his predecessors as he was surpassed by Chateaubriand. Saint-Pierre had read Ossian and Gessner, and travelled in the tropics, but Chateaubriand travelled all over the world. He had visited places so much unlike as the United States and Palestine—for the express purpose of finding new scenes to describe, or, as he would have put it, new pictures to paint. The result is hard to express in words, and to select the finest passages from his works is impossible. It may be doubted if anything can exceed the richness with which some of his canvases are coloured: richness, indeed, which is not always accompanied by precision of detail, while occasionally he loses all sense of proportion and his pictures become absurd. But it is not alone by his most gorgeous passages, which are the most freely quoted, that he attracted the later Romanticists and attracts readers even to-day. He has many less known descriptions, where not a word is wasted, not an unnecessary figure appears on the canvas, but where, nevertheless, the effect which he wishes to convey is felt as surely as if one were witnessing the scene oneself.

“Pénétrez dans ces forêts américaines aussi vieilles que le monde,” runs one of these. “Quel profond silence dans ces retraites quand les vents reposent ! quelles voix inconnues quand les vents commencent à s’élever ! Etes-vous immobile, tout est muet ; faites-vous un pas, tout soupire. La nuit s’approche, les ombres s’épaississent ; on entend des troupeaux de bêtes sauvages passer dans les ténèbres ; la terre murmure sous vos pas ; quelques coups de foudre font mugir les déserts ; la forêt s’agite, les arbres tombent, un fleuve inconnu coule devant vous. La lune sort enfin de l’Ouest ; à mesure que vous passez au pied des arbres, elle semble errer devant vous dans leur cime et suivre tristement vos yeux.”

One of Chateaubriand's most frequent devices is the use of the nature simile, now short, now sustained, to give variety to an otherwise prosaic passage:

"Le vieillard presse ses deux enfants contre son cœur: ainsi l'on voit un saule creusé par les ans, dont le sein entr'ouvert porte quelques fleurs de la prairie. . . ." "Le cœur de l'homme est comme l'éponge du fleuve, qui tantôt boit une onde pure dans les temps de sérénité, tantôt s'enfle d'une eau bourbeuse quand le ciel a troublé les eaux. . . ." "Lorsqu'une neige éclatante tombe de la voûte éthérée, souvent l'aquilon s'apaise. . . . Ainsi quand le fils de Lasthénès recommença son discours, l'assemblée fit un profond silence."

A most gorgeous and elaborate example, illustrating the hum of the crowd in the Senate:

"Dans un champ où l'ivraie et d'inutiles fleurs de pourpre et d'azur s'élèvent au milieu du froment d'or, si quelque zéphyr se glisse dans la forêt diaprée, d'abord les plus frêles épis courbent leurs têtes; bientôt le souffle croissant balance en tumulte les gerbes fécondes et les plantes stériles: tel paraissait dans le sénat le mouvement de tant d'hommes divers."

In this connection, too, must be cited the superb finale of *Le Dernier Abencérage*, a miniature epilogue, than which nothing could better enhance the half-tragic, indeterminate conclusion of the story:

"Lorsqu'on sort de Tunis par la porte qui conduit aux ruines de Carthage, on trouve un cimetière: sous un palmier dans un coin de ce cimetière, on m'a montré un tombeau qu'on appelle *le tombeau du dernier Abencérage*. Il n'a rien de remarquable; la pierre sépulcrale en est tout unie; seulement d'après une coutume des Maures, on a creusé au milieu de cette pierre un léger enfoncement avec le ciseau. *L'eau de la pluie se rassemble au fond de cette coupe funèbre et sert, dans un climat brûlant, à désaltérer l'oiseau du ciel.*"

This passage is also an example of another process of the artist born—that of suggesting pictures by a few strokes of the brush without elaborating them. The celebrated description in *Atala* of a forest on fire is among the best illustrations of this:

“Un vent impétueux, sorti du couchant, roule les nuages sur les nuages; les forêts plient, le ciel s'ouvre coup sur coup, et à travers ses crevasses on aperçoit de nouveaux cieux et des campagnes ardentes. Quel affreux, quel magnifique spectacle! La foudre met le feu dans les bois; l'incendie s'étend comme une chevelure de flammes; des colonnes d'étincelles et de fumée assiègent les nues, qui vomissent leurs foudres dans le vaste embrasement.”

Nature, like melancholy and religion, is steeped in emotion. We are not told merely that the rain drips slowly on the foliage, that the cloud sails by, that the leaves crackle as the brother and sister walk through the wood: we are told what effect these simple things have on the mind of René. When he is least affected by it, the sounding cataract haunts him like a passion; in its extremest form his “feeling” for Nature passes into a glorification of the savage state. “Heureux sauvages!” he exclaims, recalling Jean-Jacques Rousseau. “Oh! que ne puis-je jouir de la paix qui vous accompagne toujours!”

Chateaubriand has at least his share of the cosmopolitan spirit which marked the predecessors of Romanticism as strongly as Romanticism itself. He travelled more widely than either Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, or Mme. de Staël. But he travelled and wrote about his travels, not, like Mme. de Staël, from a desire to give instruction and spread knowledge of the countries which he visited, but simply because he was constrained to paint: “J'allais chercher des *images*, voilà tout!” he said of himself, and

though Sainte-Beuve adds rather sneeringly that that was all he found, it is largely due to his travels that Victor Hugo could say in 1829, "Maintenant on est orientaliste," and "L'Orient, soit comme image, soit comme pensée, est devenu, pour les intelligences autant que pour les imaginations, une sorte de préoccupation générale."¹ Let us reflect that he travelled not only in England, Switzerland, Italy, and Spain, but in various parts of America, in the Holy Land, in Greece and the Balkans, and in the North of Africa. His *Itinéraire* describes in detail the journey to Jerusalem by way of Greece, and the return by Egypt, Barbary, and Spain. It abounds in finely executed landscapes, often polished, but still sometimes in the unfinished state. There is the sunrise in the Morea, the ruins of Sparta, the entry into Athens, the visit to the Parthenon and the Acropolis, the views of Bethlehem, and the Dead Sea and the panorama of Jerusalem. It is no wonder that Sainte-Beuve declared the *Itinéraire* to be among the greatest of Chateaubriand's works, or quoted so freely from his finest descriptions. Chateaubriand opened up paths, he says, which have since become "routes battues" — "ou même rebattues!"

Besides painting the scenery and the customs of so many countries, he did useful work in continuing the opening up of England to his countrymen. As a youth of twenty-five he had been an *émigré* in this country, and he learned to know our poets amid the hard struggle for existence. Part of the result is seen in his incursions into English literature in the *Génie du Christianisme*, and more particularly in his expositions of Milton.

Attracted as he was by Young, Thomson, Gray, and Ossian, he was drawn far more irresistibly to Milton, partly because of the English poet's religious temperament, which

¹ Preface to the *Orientales*.

stands out so clearly in *Paradise Lost*, and partly also because he himself had an epic imagination, and the vast scale on which Milton's work was conceived aroused in him the sympathy of a kindred spirit.

Chateaubriand revealed Milton to his successors. He not only gives an account of *Paradise Lost* as a whole, but takes it as the ideal of a Christian epic, comparing it on the one hand with the *Iliad* and on the other with the *Divina Commedia*, challenging either Homer or Dante to produce finer passages than the finest in Milton. He uses it, too, in his discussion of the various epic types of character—the father, the mother, husband and wife, son and daughter—and again he takes Milton's Satan to illustrate his justification of the Christian epic and the substitution of the Deity, the saints, and the angels for the gods of pagan mythology. The influence of the English poet may likewise be seen in Chateaubriand's own attempts at epic writing—in the epic portion of *Les Natchez*, for example, where we have scenes in Hell with speeches closely resembling those of *Paradise Lost*, and a battle between the Indians and the French where the Miltonic Satan is present with his angels. *Les Martyrs*, too, is partly inspired by Milton; in it Eternal Providence watches over the fortunes of the Christians “to justify the ways of God to man.” There are scenes in Paradise and scenes in Hell, and the Satan is even more like Milton's than the Satan in *Les Natchez*.

Chateaubriand, as we have seen, was a great prose artist, one of the greatest, not alone of the nineteenth century, but in the whole range of French literature. Thus he follows in the succession of Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, both in the rediscovery of Nature and in the rebuilding of French prose style, which was to reach so high a pitch of perfection before the nineteenth century

was half over. This does not mean that his work is uniformly polished, much less that it is without a flaw. On the contrary, we can still find, at any rate in his epic works, *clichés* which might have been perpetrated by the most frigid of eighteenth-century verse-makers; in the *Mémoires* there are many passages which have the appearance of having been hastily and carelessly put together. But we think of Chateaubriand, not as the writer of these, but as the author of *René* and the *Génie du Christianisme*. And both in his greatest work and in the stories of which *René* is the chief, he bequeathed to his successors a lyric prose style of which Rousseau gave the first example in modern French, but which is far more limpid and rhythmical than Rousseau's, and has a balance and a harmony which his does not always possess.

Nor is this all. We must add his exceptional capacity for description; the art with which he passes from description to reflection and *vice versa*; his bold and apt use of simile and metaphor; his lofty imaginative flights and the attention which he often pays to detail. In all these respects he stands out far above his contemporaries, and, as we shall see, inspired many of his successors.

Where he rendered the greatest service to Romanticism from the artistic standpoint, however, was certainly in the use which he made of local colour. He had not only a vivid imagination, but an infallible eye for what was characteristic in a given *milieu* and for what would strike the reader. Thus he cannot be included among the writers whom Victor Hugo condemns for "making local colour" — "c'est-à-dire d'ajouter après coup quelques touches criardes çà et là sur un ensemble du reste parfaitement faux et conventionnel."¹ There was little that was false in Chateaubriand's landscapes. Conventionality is in-

¹ *Préface de Cromwell*.

variably allied to vagueness; and he saw his own pictures so clearly that he could not but crowd into them every possible detail which made for the semblance of reality. Thus we read in the American tales "la lune des fleurs" (May) "avec le cri de la cigogne" (at dawn); seventy-three years appears as "sept fois dix neiges et trois neiges de plus," and so on. Before the narrative of *Atala* begins, the reader is presented with a full description of the country in which its events take place. He gazes at its massive flora—"les vignes sauvages, les bignonias, les coloquintes. . . ." He hears with some wonder of the "serpents verts," "hérons bleus," "flamants roses," and "perroquets verts à têtes jaunes," which with young crocodiles adorn the banks of the Mississippi; of the tropical birds which sing in the trees, and the great bison who might be the god of the river. Finally, he is made to feel the contrast between the calm of the savannahs and the weird and varied noises which animate the river's eastern banks. Then, too, he may read throughout the book of the customs of the Indians—of their food: "de la crème de noix, du sucre d'érable, de la sagamité," the cooking of the last-named delicacy being realistically described; of their occupations: hunting the castor, fishing, boat-building; of their strange marriage dowries and the customs connected with death. The child's mossy cradle hangs from the maple branches, is rocked by the wind to the accompaniment of the forest birds. If he dies, his soul will descend to earth again in the likeness of a drop of dew. If he lives, the trees of the forest will whisper to him secret counsels of love; he will choose a lady and love her as he loves the sun. When he has lived out his simple life of birth, love, and death, he is gathered to the tomb of his fathers after his body has been ceremonially dried in the sun. These and similar details may be collected freely from here and there; a

typical consecutive passage is that from *Atala* which describes an Indian council scene:

“Le conseil s’assemble. Cinquante vieillards, en manteau de castor, se rangent sur des espèces de gradins faisant face à la porte du pavillon. Le grand chef est assis au milieu d’eux, tenant à la main le calumet de paix à demi coloré pour la guerre. A la droite des vieillards se placent cinquante femmes, couvertes d’une robe de plumes de cygne. Les chefs de guerre, le tomahawk à la main, le pennage en tête, les bras et la poitrine teints de sang, prennent la gauche. . . .”

Similar examples might be given from the *Itinéraire*, the *Mémoires*, and the *Martyrs*, in which Chateaubriand has seized and reproduced the details of life in so many and so widely varying countries. In the *Martyrs* it is particularly noteworthy that he shows the results of reading as well as of observation, and reconstructs with great skill the conditions of early Christianity. The *vraisemblance* of the Eastern scenes is due not only to the fidelity to life of the descriptions, but also to the coupling of these with the names of places well known to every reader—a blending, in other words, of the familiar and the remote. All countries and all epochs, besides the vast perspectives of Heaven and Hell, are opened up in this long epic. Nature, it is needless to say, though, of course, less prominent than in the imaginative tales, is not forgotten. Mountain, river-side, and desert; characteristic scenes like the journey of a caravan and a pilgrimage to Calvary; the cedar and the fig-tree, dried-up streams and rushing mountain torrents—all find a place, together with many gratuitous imaginative landscapes which are not here in question.

Though some of Chateaubriand’s descriptions are romantic in the sense of *romanesque*, the products of an imagination which could not always keep within bounds,

yet he took without any doubt a great deal of trouble to perfect his landscapes and not less to convey a true impression of countries which, when he wrote, were but little known. He is concerned, moreover, to make this evident. He does not wish his book to be what Victor Hugo half-ironically called the *Orientales*—"un livre inutile de pure poésie." On the contrary, he informs his readers frequently that his landscapes are from life. In an Introduction to the *Itinéraire* ("bourrée," says Sainte-Beuve, "d'une érudition indigeste") he presents us with historical and archæological details which he has collected, and to which he frequently appeals in the course of his narration. "C'est sur les lieux mêmes," he says in an *Avertissement* to the *Abencérage* which foreshadows some of the *Préfaces* of twenty years later—"C'est sur les lieux mêmes que j'ai pris, pour ainsi dire, les vues de Grenade, de l'Alhambra, et de cette mosquée transformée en église qui n'est autre chose que la cathédrale de Cordoue." And in the course of the story he reminds us again that several of the incidents, together with a song and an inscription which add local colour to the story, are taken from actual fact and observation. The same might be said of any of his other books, as it is, indeed, said of the *Itinéraire*.

Finally must be noted two further ways in which Chateaubriand contributed to Romanticism; in both of these he appears very evidently as the stalwart opponent of Classicism and the precursor of Victor Hugo. First, there is his mediævalism; Hugo, it may be remembered, described the Orient and the Middle Ages as the two "vast oceans of poetry"—Chateaubriand dived deeply into both. Dante and Tasso are raised to the same level, and given the same consideration, as Homer and Virgil on the one hand and the Bible and Milton on the other. But this is not all. Painting, music, sculpture, and

architecture are included in the branches of art in which Chateaubriand follows the mediæval or, in other words, the Christian ideal.

Christianity has exalted the purest form of music, he tells us—the use of the human voice. It has invented the organ and brought melody even from brass. There is no music like that of the Church, which has won over savage tribes whom no other argument could convince. The beauties of Christian music are, indeed, so well known that it is unnecessary to insist on them. Christian art, too, which, like Christian literature, aims at reproducing Nature, is far superior to that of paganism. If it is said that Christianity has no great artists, it is easy to quote a large number of names, beginning with those of Michael Angelo and Raphaël. No subjects of art can be found superior to those which are in the Bible. The sacrifice of Isaac is both simpler and more touching than Iphigeneia's, and how can one compare Bacchanalia, festivals of Venus, and metamorphoses, with the leading incidents in the Life and Death of Jesus Christ? Similar claims are made, though in much less detail, for modern sculpture.

Since the seventeenth century everything "Gothic," in France as much as in our own country, had been taboo. Chateaubriand was among the first of French writers to declare boldly that it, too, had its place in art; the restoration of Gothic architecture was his way of modernising this branch of art. He justifies it by two lines of reasoning. First, he says, it is the only form of architecture which is in accordance with the customs and temperaments of modern peoples: the Greeks would not have approved of an Egyptian temple at Athens, nor the Egyptians of a Greek temple at Memphis. It is impossible for us to-day to build elegant Greek temples, but it is equally impossible to enter a Gothic church without feeling irre-

sistibly the presence of God. Secondly, Chateaubriand claims that the origin of architecture was in the forests, where men first worshipped the Deity; that styles of architecture varied with the climate of the country and the temperament of its people, and that therefore the style of architecture which became acclimatised in Gaul is the most suitable for the France of to-day.

"Le moi est haïssable." Nothing could be more exactly the antithesis of Chateaubriand's attitude than this celebrated dictum. With him the *moi* is everywhere, understood if not expressed. He is incapable of portraying characters, with the exception of his own; and this he presents to us under a hundred forms. He is in all his books, in all his heroes, and, by virtue of the emotionalism which impregnates them, in most of his pictures. And we can see from his character that this could not but be so. He was excessively proud, sensitive, self-conscious, self-esteeming. "M. de Chateaubriand eut tous les orgueils," says M. Lanson, "depuis l'orgueil vertu jusqu'à l'orgueil sottise." Even when he sets out to write of Napoleon, he continually obtrudes himself quite needlessly into the history: it is the history, not of Napoleon, but of Napoleon as conceived by Chateaubriand. At every step we have the author's criticism of his actions, or the motives which he imputes to him. He quotes his own writings and relates how people came to visit him and ask his advice.¹ In summing up Napoleon's character he protests vehemently and at length that he cannot indulge in false praise or unreasoning flattery, ignoring the obvious retort that there is not the slightest reason why it should occur to him to do so. His eloquent pro-

¹ *E.g.*, the conversation with Louis XVIII. at the end of Book V. of the *Mémoires*.

testations of allegiance to the Bourbons, also, are profoundly egoistic, as was, perhaps, in actual fact, his dramatic resignation after the assassination of the Duc d'Enghien. If his memoirs are intensely personal, it is needless to insist that his master-work and his imaginative writings are more so, and that to his lyricism and his easily impressed if not truly impressive personality he owed much of his later influence.

CHAPTER IV

A PRECURSOR OF LAMARTINE: MILLEVOYE

IN devoting a whole chapter to one who was a decidedly minor poet, if also a charming one, it seems necessary to begin by pointing out his importance, not in himself, but in the history of his art. Much of the work of Millevoye belongs entirely to the eighteenth century; he is, too, the best representative of the poetry of the Empire and the *goût troubadour* we have already described; in the elegy he is the predecessor of Lamartine. Better than Chénier, he links together those movements in appearance so widely sundered, Classicism and Romanticism. It is worth while, then, to study his poetry in some detail, not so much for its own sake, as because in its three chief branches it illustrates the course of French poetry for fifty years.

Millevoye belongs to the eighteenth century in his love of its elegists, whom he tried with considerable success to imitate. He was a personal friend of Parny, whom he placed far above Bertin, in spite of his great admiration for the latter. It is impossible, he declares, to exhaust the praises of Parny, that

“très-aimable païen,
Demi-sacré, demi-profane,
Bon poète, mauvais chrétien,
Qu’Apollon sauve et que Dieu damne.”

Like Parny, still more like Chénier, he revels in the periphrases with which the elegy of the day was filled. He

imitates almost exactly that passage of Chénier which describes Camilla's early morning cup of coffee, when he tells how the merchant

“ Du fertile Yémen recueille le nectar . . .
Et le Japon, du creux de ses rochers lointains
De son luxe fragile enrichit nos festins.”

The celebrated description (in the *Iambes*) of the clock in Saint-Lazare is equalled by Millevoye's

“ Aiguille qui du temps, dans ses douze demeures,
Ne marque plus les pas, ne fixe plus les cours”;

and surpassed by his ingenious rendering of “in three months” —

“ Trois fois déjà la nocturne courrière
Avait rempli sa paisible carrière;
Au front des cieux, le troisième croissant
Arrondissait son disque pâissant ”

Not only is Millevoye a representative of the eighteenth century in its pseudo-classic aspects; he is also a disciple of the *philosophes*, and, like Chénier, would fain be the poet of the *Encyclopédie*. *Le Voyageur*, which received the prize of the Academy in 1807, inevitably recalls Chénier's projected poem, *L'Amérique*; in its faith in progress and its love of material prosperity it shows its author to be the disciple of Voltaire rather than of Rousseau. The great discoverers are to him the true benefactors of mankind. Thanks to them,

“ De nouvelles cités s'élèvent et fleurissent;
La raison s'agrandit, et les mœurs se polissent.
Le désert a des lois, des vertus et des arts.”

It is the traveller who

“ Des diverses humeurs observe la nuance,
Et des climats divers la secrète influence. . .
Cherche des temps fameux le vestige effacé,
Et prête au loin l'oreille aux leçons du passé.”

Elsewhere the poet praises Charlemagne as the author of

“Ce code utile, ami de l'innocence”;

Alfred the Great as the founder of “la belle institution du jury” and of the University of Oxford,

“Le monument de gloire et de sagesse,
Savant gymnase, où l'ardente jeunesse
Doit s'abreuver aux sources du passé.”

Napoleon also, it will be remembered, was a patron of learning and one of the greatest of law-givers.

Eighteenth-century exoticism, too, is not without its effect on Millevoye, and here he is influenced as much by the elegists as by Bernardin. Perhaps as a result of the crumbling of France's colonial empire, Parisian society at this period contained a large Creole element. Both Parny and Bertin were natives of the Ile Bourbon; Chénier had friends in the same circles. Parny, according to M. Potez, shows no trace of exoticism in his works; but the same is not true of Bertin, who frequently paints the land and sea scapes of his tropical home, and speaks of “bananiers, lataniers, palmiers, cotonniers, guaviers, jamroses,” and similar plants, in the most approved style of Bernardin himself. It was Parny, however, who used to tell Millevoye: “La poésie s'use; il faut la rajeunir par des images nouvelles. Retraced d'autres mœurs, peignez une autre nature.” Parny's recipe for renovating poetry was thus very similar to Voltaire's plan for renovating tragedy; his pupil did his best to follow it. Many of his *Chants Elégiques* are exotic in subject and attempt to be exotic in treatment also, while the display of extensive and peculiar knowledge in the notes reminds one of a favourite device of the Romantics.

La Sulamite is Eastern rather than specifically Biblical in tone, being “tirée du Cantique des Cantiques, pastorale

charmante attribuée à Salomon, et imitée par Voltaire avec [une] piquante originalité." Another of the elegies gives the laments of an Arab at the tomb of his steed, and this is compared by its author with a passage in the *Abufar* of "le respectable Ducis." *Le Mancenillier* is a love-story of the Antilles; *Le Tombeau du Poète Persan* deals with a legend on the death of Firdousi, "extrait d'un recueil de poésies publié en allemand par Mme. Helmina de Chézy"; *Le Pauvre Nègre* has much the same subject as Longfellow's *The Slave's Dream*, embellished with much eighteenth-century sentiment.

For sentimentality tinged with a gentle melancholy is the most striking trait of Millevoye's work, a trait which connects him on the one hand with Rousseau and Diderot, on the other with Lamartine. His Alfred the Great is a forerunner of the Romantic hero:

"Alfred, plongé dans sa mélancolie
Errait encore au pied du mont voisin;
De longs soupirs échappaient de son sein,
Il écouta la cadence affaiblie
Du lai plaintif."

His heroines are even more tearful and Romantic than his heroes. In *Charlemagne à Pavie* we hear of "la touchante Ophélie," "douce et livrée à la mélancolie," who is characterised like Hugo's Régina by

"Ces yeux si doux, cette douce pâleur,
Ce mol accent et ce vague sourire,
Ce front pensif, et triste sans douleur."

After this we are scarcely surprised to hear Millevoye exclaim, perhaps under the influence of Chateaubriand—

"Que des Canadiens j'aime l'antique usage !
Sur les bords du torrent, près du rocher sauvage,
Leur âme se nourrit du charme des douleurs;
Ils cultivent la tombe et l'arrosent de pleurs" ;

or to hear him speak o

"ces pleurs délicieux,
Trésor d'une âme aimante et de bonheur remplie:
Car le bonheur lui-même a sa mélancolie."

It need hardly be said that Millevoye was influenced by individual writers of the eighteenth century. His debts to Rousseau, Bernardin, and still more to Diderot, are general rather than specific, but the same is by no means true of his debt to Chénier. The collected works of the latter were not published till 1819, but Millevoye is known to have seen them in manuscript, as would be proved, were proof necessary, by the fact that in the notes to Book II. of his *Elegies* he quotes from *L'Aveugle*. Indeed the whole of this book consists of weak but graceful poems in the style of Chénier. *Le Combat d'Homère et d'Hésiode* contains at least one striking reminiscence of *L'Aveugle*:

"Homère alors chanta, d'une sublime voix,
Les peuples immolés aux querelles des rois,
La Discorde attelant les coursiers de la guerre,
L'Injure aux pieds d'airain foulant au loin la terre."

Homère mendiant has the same theme as *L'Aveugle*, but how differently treated! Millevoye's Homer is simply a melancholy and even rather querulous old man, conscious that his gifts are slipping away, and anxious only to settle down in peace and quietness for the rest of his days. In *Les Adieux d'Hélène* occurs a line taken almost literally from *Le Jeune Malade*:

"Et je pars! et demain tu n'auras plus de mère."

Local colour is dearer to Millevoye than even to Chénier, but his descriptions smell of the lamp, and in his poems appear the defects and not the qualities of that method which even with the greater poet sometimes produced

nothing more than a careful mosaic. It is noticeable that, desirous like Corneille of giving an air of actuality to his work, he writes chiefly of historical or legendary characters—Homer, Hesiod, Æschylus, Virgil, Helen, Danaë—whereas Chénier, with greater art, more often chooses purely imaginary heroes, thus avoiding a trap into which so many of the Romantics were to fall. Like Chénier, Millevoye believes in the use of sonorous names. Too often his theory in this respect is better than his practice, yet now and again one discovers such a line as

“ Mollement épanchés aux vallons d'Aonie,”

while

“ Iion, Babylone, Ecbatane, et Palmyre ”

recalls not so much Chénier as Chénier's master, Milton.

Millevoye shares the admiration of the eighteenth century for English writers. It was Milton's project of writing a poem on Alfred the Great which suggested the same subject to him, and possibly his choice of Biblical themes owes something to Milton too. His views on the English poet's gifts and limitations are similar to those of Chénier:

“ S'il chante la lumière éclipée à ses yeux,
Milton jouit encore de la clarté des cieux. . . .”

“ Voyez l'ardent Milton, incorrect et sublime,
S'élancer dans les cieux, ou plonger dans l'abîme:
Du goût, à ses regards, le flambeau n'a point lui,
Mais comme ses défauts, ses beautés sont à lui.”

Shakespeare he apparently prefers to admire from a distance, and he has borrowed little from “ ce peintre énergique des royales infortunes.” On the other hand, his admiration for Pope is great. He translates part of the *Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard*, exclaiming, “Honneur à l'illustre Pope, qui a reproduit sans les affaiblir, et en les embellissant quelquefois, les traits énergiques ou attend-

rissants des lettres originales !” He is surprised that “ce traducteur célèbre de la plus belle des épopées” should not have attempted an epic of his own on Alfred. In *L’Amour maternel* he praises the filial piety of “[ce] chantre dont Windsor admire l’harmonie”; and it was perhaps the *Rape of the Lock* which, together with Ariosto’s poem, suggested to him the introduction of the Sylphs into *Charlemagne à Pavie*.

Gray, of course, receives the conventional praise for his *Elegy*, yet it seems that he would have appealed to Millevoye rather as the author of the *Norse Fragments*, had these been known in France at the time. In *Alfred*, the three daughters of Ragnar Lodbrok weave the standard of the Danes while singing the refrain:

“Formons, formons le tissu de la guerre;
Chantons, chantons le refrain de la mort.”

Millevoye has evidently drawn on the same source as Gray in *The Fatal Sisters*, with its

“Weave the crimson web of war !”

—and that source is the *Introduction à l’Histoire de Danne marc* of the Genevese Paul Henri Mallett. He has reminiscences, too, of some of the national odes of Klopstock, which Mme. de Staël’s description and translation in *De l’Allemagne*¹ had brought once more into vogue. His interest in Northern poetry strengthens his love for Ossian, natural as this was in any case to the child of the eighteenth century and the poet of the Empire. *Alfred* opens with an invocation to the

“Muse du Nord, qui, seule et recueillie,
Au bruit lointain de l’orageuse mer
[Va] répétant, dans les longs soirs d’hiver,
De l’Ecoissais la ballade vieillie.”

¹ ii. 10.

It is this same type of ballad, "si connue des peuples du Nord . . . telle qu'on la chante encore dans les montagnes d'Ecosse" that Millevoye desires to imitate in his own compositions, and these latter are to be carefully distinguished, he says, from the *ballades* of the despised Marot.

But not only does he gather up the scattered threads of Romanticism visible in the eighteenth century—he is also the amiable minstrel of the *goût troubadour*, of "le temps de la mode d'Ossian et d'un Charlemagne enjolivé, le temps de la fausse Gaule poétique bien avant Thierry, des Scandinaves bien avant les cours d'Ampère, de la ballade avant Victor Hugo." The armour of Charlemagne is a disguise which reveals instead of hiding his successor Napoleon. Kings, said Hugo, were three a penny in the Emperor's day, and Millevoye agrees with him:

"L'heureux vainqueur des princes de la terre,
Qui devant lui frémissent prosternés,
Daigne accueillir leur foule tributaire,
Et protéger ses vassaux couronnés."

So much for the autocrat of Fontainebleau; here is the victor of the day of Austerlitz:

"Charles, monté sur l'ardent Fulgurin,
Parcourt les rangs: sa parole enflammée
Qui garantit le succès du combat,
Fait un héros du plus obscur soldat;
Et d'un regard il double son armée."

The Twelve Peers are Napoleon's Marshals; the army is his army, its soldiers are utterly devoted to him and loyal to one another, animated by the most complete disdain for all outside the military caste, and particularly for the fat and trembling burgesses of conquered towns.

And the social side of life under the Empire is painted with equal fidelity.

“ Je veux mêler aux belliqueux accords
Les doux accents d’amour et de féerie,”

announces Millevoye at the beginning of *Charlemagne*, and he certainly does so successfully. Fata Morgana is the villain of the piece; we see her now in her cloudy palace

“ dont la perle argentée
A revêtu les murs éblouissants,”

now in her “char nébuleux,” again in the enchanted garden produced by her magic art. She is surrounded by her Sylphs, “troupe volage,” the “peuple Lutin” who come by moonlight

“ au bruit d’un luth sonore,
Sous les rameaux du jeune sycomore,
Danser en rond jusqu’aux feux du matin.”

They obey Morgana, yet at the same time are the subjects of Oberon and Titania—perhaps because Millevoye remained undecided between the rival accounts of the polity of fairyland given by Ariosto and Shakespeare respectively. Yet the extreme artificiality of his treatment proves clearly towards which he inclines; and if this indication were not sufficient, we are shown Morgana enraptured by “des accords ravissants,” produced by neither Orpheus nor Oberon, but by

“ un mortel: Arioste est son nom.
N’entends-tu pas la voix aérienne
De ton Roland signaler les travaux ? . . .
Console-toi, même de Roncevaux !”

The final trait is indeed decisive.

And Charlemagne, like the warriors of the First Empire, is quite willing to be consoled. At the court of Didier the Lombard, as seen in the verse of Millevoye, the amenities of peace flourish no less than the arts of war.

In the gardens of the palace the gay minstrel sings on his ivory lyre to the tender Ophelia; in the tilting-yard a "belliqueuse fête" takes place at frequent intervals for the benefit of the ladies, for "la beauté doit régner sur les braves," at least according to Millevoye's Alfred the Great. The ideal of the paladins is not Roland, even "furieux," but Oliver, of whom the *jongleurs* sing in the Old French of Wardour Street:

"A sa merci tombait sur le préau
 Maint damoiseil en mainte cour plénière;
 Paraissait-il, devant le jouvenceau
 Les vieux barons inclinaient leur bannière.
 Mainte beauté pour lui brûla d'amour;
 Il fit rêver plus d'une châtelaine:
 A son cimier l'on voyait tour à tour
 De leurs cheveux flotter l'or ou l'ébène."

The France of Millevoye's Charlemagne is every whit as orthodox as the France of the Concordat and the *Génie du Christianisme*. The duty of the warrior is to defend "son Dieu, son roi, son pays, et sa dame," and one thinks of a State *Te Deum* at Notre Dame when reading of a service before "cet autel où brille l'oriflamme"—

"Le prêtre enfin aux oreilles charmées
 Fit retentir l'hymne cher au vainqueur,
 Et les guerriers répétèrent en chœur:
 'Louange au Dieu qui conduit les armées!'"

In reality, however, Millevoye has little genuine religious feeling, as is shown by the difference in spirit between his gently pagan elegies and the *Méditations*; yet he is a devout adherent of the æsthetic Christianity of Chateaubriand. He is swift to seize the decorative effect of the dim vaults and Gothic arches of the mediæval cathedral, of the white-haired patriarch, of rich vestments, of Gregorian plain-song. He realises the value to the

poet of the aged hermit and the simple-hearted villager who

“ du pieux solitaire
Dévotement allait baiser la croix,
Et le missel, et le pieux rosaire ”;

of the “Thébaïde profonde” which becomes the refuge of the vanquished Didier; of the pilgrim who has gathered simples “en voyageant aux monts de la Galice.” The peaceful abode of Emma is quite after the manner of Chateaubriand:

“ Des saints martyrs les figures gothiques
Ornent des murs les pilastres antiques;
Le chapelet, et l'eau sainte, et la croix
Sont suspendus aux modestes parois.”

But the religion that was so much to his great contemporary meant to Millevoye no more than this, except in so far as the spirit of the age affected him in his choice of subject. Even here it is the artist and not the Christian who speaks: “Les livres saints respirent cette mélancolie dont le charme mystérieux s'augmente encore de la naïveté des anciens jours. Ce sont les adieux de Noémie à ses filles infortunées, ceux de la fille de Jephté à ses compagnons et à la vie; c'est David pleurant, au pied du Gelboé, Saül et Jonathas; c'est Rachel qui a perdu ses fils et qui ne veut pas être consolée parce qu'ils ne sont plus.” If the views which Millevoye here expresses are Chateaubriand's rather than his own, one can perceive in them, nevertheless, the first suggestions of Hugo's *Ruth et Boöz* and Vigny's *Fille de Jephté*. That Vigny in particular was influenced is suggested by two passages which may well have inspired the poem of *Moïse*.¹

¹ “ Quand Moïse, aux regards de la foule tremblante,
Franchit du haut Horeb la cime étincelante,
Israël éperdu, prosterné devant Dieu,
A son libérateur disait un long adieu.”

Millevoye is connected also with Chateaubriand and the Romantics by his mediævalism. As has already been seen, there is much in his love of the Middle Ages that is mere affectation, and he shares the distorted view which made the exploits of Charlemagne appear to the theatrical heroes of the First Empire as the scenario of a comédie-ballet. The very names of his characters are significant: we know instinctively what to expect from a lady who possesses "le doux nom d'Azoline." His poems are animated by the spirit of some of Scott's earlier ballads—that, for example, of "Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene." *Charlemagne*, like the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, is at once a tale of chivalry and a tale of *diablerie*; the rôle of "l'innocente Loïse" in one of the *romances* is very similar to that of Constance in *Marmion*: yet what is admirable in Scott seems merely absurd and incongruous in Millevoye—he lacks the poetic force which can make the ridiculous seem graceful, if not sublime.

In the matter of diction, Millevoye resembles, not Scott

"Cependant je partis, et, d'une marche lente,
Traversai de Pharan l'immensité brûlante,
Ephraïm et Silo, Séir et Bethzamé."

David pleurant Saül et Jonathas.

We are indebted to Mr. Chouville for the following note: "Il y aurait d'autres rapprochements et plus convaincants entre Millevoye et Vigny, mais seulement dans les poèmes du début. *E.g.* :

" 'D'où venez-vous, Pudeur ?' . . .—*Eloa* III.

" 'O Pudeur ! où fuis-tu ?' . . .—*Les Adieux d'Hélène* ;

l'incident de *La Femme Adultère* (vers. 70-81) imité de la même pièce de Millevoye;]

" 'Et l'heure du sourire est l'heure de l'amour.'—*Symétha*

" 'Heure du soir est aurore d'amour.'—*Emma et Eginard* :

surtout dans *Dolorida*, vers. 41-42; et vers la fin: 'je te voyais partout, etc.,' qui rappelle les *Regrets d'un Infidèle*."

indeed, but those imitators of the great novelist who thought that a mediæval atmosphere was to be achieved by the process of sprinkling their pages with "varlet" and "gadzooks." Millevoye relies on the simple plan of omitting the definite article, and, when he wants to be particularly archaic, the pronoun subject as well. As thus:

"Cor va sonnand; haut pont-levis s'abaisse:
Yvain d'abord, introduit par le nain,
Présenté fut à la belle maîtresse. . . .
Heure s'écoule et festin se dispose;
Pompeux était comme festin royal."

Further, no self-respecting ballad is complete without its *châtelaine*; its *tournoi*—to rime with *palefroi*; its *bachette*, who naturally wanders *seulette*; its *menestrel* and *damoisel*, who serenade the *pastourelle* or *jouvencelle* leaning encouragingly out of her *tourelle*.

It would, however, be unfair to see in Millevoye nothing more than the French equivalent of the author of the *Scottish Chiefs*. His notes prove that he had read the poem of "Adenès, ancien troubadour," that he knew of the Capitularies, and was not unacquainted with those "chants militaires . . . dont la naïveté, quelquefois énergique, est plus souvent triviale," on which Gaston Paris was later to build up his theory of the *cantilènes*. He knows at least the names of Carloman and Witikind, of Alcuin, Adelard, and Hilduin, and speaks of the Carlovingian Renaissance and the Schools of the Palace. A list of the warriors of Charlemagne includes two of the Quatre Fils Aymon, Ogier le Danois, and Garin de Monglave. *Alfred* shows an even greater striving after local colour. We hear of the Norns, the Valkyries, the scalds, the death-song of Ragnar Lodbrok, the Saxon banner of the White Horse, the Land-Ravager of the Danes; we are shown a Danish feast where the warriors consume

oxen roasted whole—and badly under-done, delicately hints the poet—accompanied by horns of hydromel and “bière écumante.”

In any case, his mediævalism, true or false, was not without its influence on the Romantic poets. His view of the Middle Ages was that which they absorbed almost automatically in their youth—for in those days everyone read Millevoye; it was that which remained popular even after the formation of the first Cénacle. And more precise debts still can be discovered. *Emma et Eginard* is the first faint water-colour sketch of Vigny's *La Neige*, and it was to Millevoye that Hugo owed his interest in the ballad as distinct from the *ballade*.

Yet, when we have spoken of his sense of ornamental religion and his love of the Middle Ages, we have still to name Millevoye's greatest contribution to Romanticism. He marks an important stage in that poetic development which, beginning with Chénier's poems to Fanny, culminates in Lamartine's poems to Elvire, and which makes the elegy once more a living thing, the vehicle of genuine sentiment rather than of frigid wit. He succeeded in imposing on his contemporaries his own formula: the elegy is henceforth to sing of “la chute d'un arbre en fleur, les ravages du torrent, la perte d'un agneau chéri.” In it “ruins live once more, solitude is repeopled, and the tomb is no longer silent”; its strains are “sweet and sad at the same time, like the memory of past happiness.” *La Demeure abandonnée* is *Le Lac* before Lamartine, *Tristesse d'Olympio* before Hugo:

“Elle est partie ! hélas ! peut-être sans retour !

Elle est partie ; et mon amour

Redemande en vain sa présence.

Lieux qu'elle embellissait, j'irai du moins vous voir ;

A sa place j'irai m'asseoir,

Et lui parler en son absence.”

But Lamartine and Hugo, no doubt on account of the optimism derived from their religion, are, with all their sadness, devoid of that morbid feeling which constantly taints the work of Millevoye. When he exclaims to Night:

“ Pour toi, déité que j'implore,
Je veux sur le bord des ruisseaux
Unir le pâle sycamore
A l'if, ornement des tombeaux,”

we know what foreign influence to suspect, even if he had not himself given the clue in a reference to “ Young, enseveli dans son chagrin profond.” And *La Chute des Feuilles*, with all its plaintive beauty, certainly stamps him as the founder of “ l'école poitrinaire,” and suggests that Sainte-Beuve in particular was not unaffected by the poetry which he described as “ des premiers accords doucement expirants, signal d'un chant plus mélodieux, et comme de la fauvette des bois ou du rouge-gorge au printemps avant le rossignol.”

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NOVEL.

BOTH before and during the Romantic movement the storm-centre was the theatre, the stage was the platform from which dramatists proclaimed—or preached—their views on art, politics, ethics, life in general. The novel had fallen from its previous high estate, and its great days as an instrument of propaganda were gone never to return. There could not be a second *Candide*, a second *Rameau*, a second *Julie*; on the other hand, one reflects with joy that neither could there be a second *Bélisaire*. Yet what it lost in public pomp it more than gained in personal influence; as much as poetry it becomes the interpreter of the sorrows and the heart-searchings of the age—indeed, a more intimate and less pretentious *genre*, it often speaks of them with even greater candour and precision. It is always in the novels of a century that we find those human documents from which the character of the time itself can be reconstructed; and in this particular instance the extreme productiveness of authors and the extreme subjectivity of their works provide a mass of evidence unequalled for detail and accuracy.

We have already considered the novels of Chateaubriand and Mme. de Staël, which contain the germ of every kind of novel attempted by the Romantics. If George Sand's heroines are the direct descendants of Corinne and Delphine—with the centre of gravity moved from

the head to the heart—we can find in *Les Martyrs* the historical novel of Hugo, Dumas, Vigny; in *René* the novel of individualism which, transposed into a lower key, will give Julien Sorel, Eugène de Rastignac, all the materialists and egoists of realism. Yet side by side with these masterpieces, linked with them in the same sequence of evolution, are other works which, just because their interest is less universal and their intrinsic value is smaller, are all the more valuable as signs of the times. On the one hand we have the novels of disillusionment and despair—*Obermann* and *Adolphe*; on the other, and connected with them by the half-mystic, *exaltée Valérie* of Mme. de Krüdener, the novels of Mmes. Cottin, de Souza, de Duras, and many other slight but charming writers. In both these types intellectual and emotional elements predominate; a second attempt at idealism, the historical novel—often only a novelette—shows the influence of Manzoni and Scott.

The “small transfigured band” of English readers of Sénancour owe their initiation to the enthusiasm of Matthew Arnold, and to this band *Obermann* is indeed “a notebook or ordinal of a soul-errant on its way unguided through the world of life and time; but, amidst all darkness, wavering circumambulation and unrest, still only looking towards eternity, and in that darkness and in that doubt realistically conscious of the Infinite.” Sénancour’s soul is the soul of a mystic, but its mysticism is not religious mysticism: if it were, the solution that satisfied Lamartine would have satisfied also the doubts and questionings of *Obermann*. But the word “God” scarcely occurs in the book. Hopeless and pathless as its philosophy may be, it is nevertheless sincere; the posing and posturing of the Romantic and Byronic heroes are absent, and through it breathes “the ground-tone of

human agony." Sénancour is a lesser Pascal, tortured by the obsession of the Infinite, but failing to see in revealed religion an answer to the problems of existence. Is there something in the climate of French-speaking Switzerland that inclines her sons to lament movingly their incapacity for that action which is their ideal? Constant suffers from the same malady as Sénancour, and Jean-Jacques' practice swore at his theory even more than the eighteenth century generally tolerated.

Obermann cannot be regarded as a novel: the epistolary form is the nearest convention; the "vous" to whom the letters are addressed never existed, and the love-story hinted at is a barefaced attempt to catch the *romanesque* public. Nor is the book an autobiography: *Obermann* is Sénancour as Sénancour would have wished to be, unmarried and financially independent. Moreover, it cannot be said that the character of *Obermann* himself develops as the years go by. He remains to the end constant to his formula, as *ennuyé* at the end as he was at the beginning. The book is a collection of meditations, of essays, of "moods." But, unlike other books of the kind, it is not a rendering at secondhand of other men's thoughts. Books are rarely mentioned, and *Obermann's* ideas, various as their value is, are his own. He was a reader; he was as much, no doubt, under the influence of Rousseau and Ossian as any of his contemporaries, deeply versed in Montaigne and Pascal, and an admirer of Voltaire's *Mahomet*; but he has made his reading an undetachable part of himself. He has the universality of Montaigne, though with the Romantic conviction of the difference between man and man, age and age, country and country, not the classical belief in the essential likeness of all epochs and climes to one another; he does, in fact, say: "En observant le seul homme que je

puisse bien sentir, je m'attache à découvrir quel pourrait être l'homme en général."

And what is Obermann's inner self? He is a prey to *ennui*, conscious of the "nothingness" that surrounds him and of the discord of the world. Man's real life is within himself, and his destiny is pre-ordained for him by some unknowable cause. His emotions are his source of joy, and bear witness to an unlimited power that is his by virtue of his humanity. This is the source of his joys as of his pains—"indincible sensibilité . . . vaste conscience d'une nature partout accablante et partout impénétrable, passion universelle, sagesse avancée, voluptueux abandon!" We cherish the very infinity of our sorrows and of our illusions. But man is out of harmony in the order of things; only on the mountains can we dimly descry "une harmonie plus visible," "un ensemble éternel." We faintly discern joys that will never be ours; we suffer because we are not what we might be; our longing for the inapprehensible is our only joy, and if this were clutched the joy would vanish. But why? why? "Pourquoi ce qui n'est point semble-t-il plus selon la nature de l'homme que ce qui est? La vie positive est aussi comme un songe; c'est elle qui n'a point d'ensemble, point de suite, point de but; elle a des parties certaines et fixes; elle en a d'autres qui ne sont que hasard et discordance." The very permanence of the heavens terrifies us. At moments times and things arise before the mind in majestic harmony, and hope dawns; but these vanish, and the question of "Why?" remains unanswered.

What cure can there be for such *ennui* as this? Not Nature, for the beautiful sunset that soothes a René only adds to the sadness of an Obermann. Not religion, for we may not hope for immortality, and where is the morality of a system of rewards and punishments? Not love, for

marriage is a lottery and a fetter. Friendship?—Ah! there, perhaps, is the one thing that can make life worth living. Obermann is a good friend, without the passion and romance of Montaigne in friendship, but faithful and sympathetic.

Obermann gives us, then, a finished sketch of the Romantic hero in his diseased apartness of soul, his desire and his impotence to will strongly. But, as George Sand pointed out in her Preface of 1840, he is not Werther, the captive in the cage; he is not René, the wounded eagle who will soar again. Still less (though George Sand does not say so) is he Byron with his "fount of fiery life." He is a Voltairean with a poet's soul; a philosopher who comes out but little short of being a saint. His disease is made up of terror in the face of the Infinite, hatred of society, idleness, bitterness, fatigue, discouragement, and doubt. His will is impotent even for suicide, though suicide is to him as defensible as emigration.¹ His case is hopeless.

Sénancour's landscapes are "Romantic"; indeed, the word "romantique," which occurs almost as often as "ennui," "vide," and "harmonie," is nearly always coupled with the nouns "lieux" or "sons." Lakes and their basins, solitudes and forests, are "romantic"; so is the *Ranz des vaches*, and so is the German accent! "Le romantique" is for him the mysterious, the ideal, the only thing that can satisfy the depth of the soul that is really *sensible*.

There are puerilities in the book; the repetitions become tedious; the story is nil and the ethics null. And yet it keeps its charm. Tasted deliberately, slowly sipped, it becomes a *livre de chevet* to those who have learned to know it.

¹ See Letter XLI.

Adolphe, like *Obermann*, is a victim of *ennui*, but *ennui* of a different kind. If the hero of this short sketch is Benjamin Constant himself, the heroine is hardly Mme. de Staël. And yet, like *Obermann*, the book is an autobiography, and contemporaries like Sismondi and Rosalie Constant recognised it as such. It is the story of the usual Romantic young man, in his early twenties, in love and out of love with a woman ten years older than himself. The *liaison* is motivated by an immature young man's vanity: Ellénore, the Polish mistress of an acquaintance of Adolphe's, seems "a conquest worthy of him." He writes a love-letter to her, and by dint of writing of passion he begins to feel passion. But Ellénore resists: she fears for her reputation (her connection with Count P. has lasted ten years and has become almost regularised), and is restrained by her loyalty. At last she yields, and almost from that moment his love decreases, while hers increases. The rest of the book is taken up with Adolphe's attempts to free himself from a bond that has become odious; that is killing his happiness, his ambition, his life. But Ellénore will not let him go: she sacrifices everything for him, kills him with kindness, and tyrannises him by tears. By some fatality Adolphe cannot tell her he loves her no longer; at every crisis false words of devotion spring to his lips. The scenes between the lovers are like those between Des Grieux and Manon Lescaut, but here it is the man's very want of love, not his all-devouring passion, that holds him to his mistress. Ellénore at last discovers the efforts her lover has made to get free, efforts which he has never dared to avow to her, and she dies of a broken heart. Adolphe's fatality still pursues him; the liberty he had so long regretted weighs heavy on him.

The novelty of the situation in *Adolphe* is that the love that is so subtly analysed is a dying and finally a dead

love. The language and style present no new feature: lyricism of language and tone is strangely absent, and there are no landscapes *à la Rousseau*. No use is made of the dead winter monotony of the Polish plains to heighten the effect of the dead passion; the Abbé Prévost had given the last scene of his poignant tragedy an atmosphere that the Romantic of the nineteenth century could not even suggest. It is by the two characters, the eternal Romantic *Elle et Lui*, that the book lives.

Ellénore, though she plays a sorry part, is a woman on a grand scale. She makes splendid and gratuitous sacrifices—of wealth, of reputation, of her children—and this is precisely why she fails to hold her lover as the heartless and mercenary Manon held hers. But her character is ill-balanced; she is exacting, violent, and impulsive, *un bel orage*; she makes scenes in the time-honoured fashion of the woman who is a mistress, not a wife. She stoops to coquetry in order to fan the dead embers of Adolphe's love; her love is at once her strength and her weakness, and of it she dies.

But Adolphe himself is drawn for us with master craft. He is not a René; in spite of the book's cosmopolitanism, its hero is Gallic, even Parisian. His timidity and excessive "sensibility" are concealed by his habit of badinage and light, mocking conversation. He finds, he tells us, a natural difficulty in talking seriously. A refreshing change for the reader after the sententious Lord Nelvil! He is a solitary soul and a rebel; he speaks of "ce caractère qu'on dit bizarre et sauvage, ce cœur étranger à tous les intérêts du monde, solitaire au milieu des hommes, et qui souffre pourtant de l'isolement auquel il est condamné." But perhaps the most delicate touch of all in Constant's analysis of the hero is the manner in which he makes him extol his mistress in words, and yet tacitly

condemn her by his diatribes against women in general, against "leur faiblesse, leur exigence, le despotisme de leur douleur." Praise need not be faint in order to be damning. What opinion do we form of the womenkind of a man who inveighs against women? And a second human touch is the weak yet chivalrous kindness of his dissimulation, of the lying words of tenderness caused by his pity—pity in which there is contempt rather than love—for the poor distraught woman. Love was dead, the language of love only remained, but it was like "ces feuilles pâles et décolorées qui, par un reste de végétation funèbre, croissent languissamment sur les branches d'un arbre déraciné."

The reader will easily discover from the above remarks the comparatively few respects in which *Adolphe* is Romantic. Apart from style, the psychology is classical in the best sense of that hard-worked word, for it is universal. Constant would say with Montaigne: "Je porte en moi la forme entière de la condition humaine." His analysis is derived from study of himself, but it is universalised. Many of the maxims recall La Rochefoucauld. Such epigrams are:

"Les hommes se blessent de l'indifférence . . . ils ne veulent pas croire qu'on s'ennuie avec eux naturellement."

"Les sentiments que nous feignons, nous finissons par les éprouver."

"Elle s'enivra de son amour, qu'elle prenait pour le nôtre."

"Pour vivre en repos avec nous-mêmes, nous travestissons en calculs et en systèmes nos impuissances ou nos faiblesses: cela satisfait cette portion de nous qui est pour ainsi dire spectatrice de l'autre."

— In the work of Mme. de Krüdener, even more than in that of Mme. de Staël and Constant, we find the influence

of the North. A Livonian by birth, possessed of all the dreamy charm of her race, she was characterised, too, by a tendency to mysticism and exaltation which would have made of her in the Middle Ages a sister of St. Clare or of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, but which in her own time won only some attention, more affectionate amusement, and finally a reputation for charlatanry. Both her own temperament and the atmosphere of *Valérie*, the novel which forms her best claim to remembrance, have much in common with the surroundings among which she grew up. The scenery of the Baltic coast in summer, with delicate blue sky, pale lakes bordered with slender birches and alders, clumps of dark and melancholy pines inland, a grey-green horizon out at sea, forms a fitting background for the figure of Valérie, the idealised portrait of Mme. de Krüdener herself, with her candid blue eyes, dead gold hair, the air of extreme fragility which made her appear "more like a thought than a human being," the alternation of fits of child-like gaiety with moments of depression and vague but all-powerful aspirations towards the Infinite.

Yet in her the poetic temperament of the North was combined with the artistic sense of the South. She came early to Paris, travelled all over Europe with her husband the Ambassador, from St. Petersburg to London and from Vienna to Rome, lived for many years in Leipsic, and ended her days in the hospice of a sisterhood she had founded in the Crimea. Like Frederick the Great and the Prince de Ligne, she possessed a French style which Frenchmen themselves might have envied; when she published *Valérie* in Paris in 1804, no less an authority than Goethe lamented that so distinguished a writer had deserted to the opposite camp. In later years it was her aim to conciliate the past glory of France with the coming

glory of Russia: in her visions she saw the Tsar Alexander—"the white angel," as opposed to Napoleon, "the black angel"—ruling in Paris as a second Charlemagne. Gustave, the hero of *Valérie*, is "nourri de Swedenborg et d'Ossian"; he loves the "delirium" of Klopstock and the "melancholy" of Gray, but the third of his trio of favourite authors is Racine—and we imagine, though the authoress does not tell us so, that his favourite play is *Bérénice*. The story opens in Sweden, but later the scene is moved to Italy, and Mme. de Krüdener just indicates the theme on which Mme. de Staël was to enlarge in *Corinne*: the sad tranquillity of Stockholm is contrasted with the feverish beauty of Venice, and the moods of the characters vary from calm to passion in harmony with the change in their surroundings.

In her cosmopolitanism Mme. de Krüdener thus enters into the tradition of Mme. de Staël; like her, too, she gives the predominant rôle to the heroine. Valérie is as much inspired as is Corinne; but where Corinne has majesty, she has only grace. Corinne wins admiration by her brilliance, Valérie wins love by her simplicity and weakness. But Mme. de Krüdener is closely related, too, to the more authentic Romanticism of Chateaubriand. Rousseau was one of the idols of her youth; she corresponded for many years with Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. The situation in her novel is the situation of *Werther*, but her hero is not, like Goethe's, a despairing seeker after the ideal: his lingering death is rather in keeping with the calmer sadness and resignation of the Christianity of Chateaubriand. Chateaubriand himself was a great admirer of Valérie, whom he described as "la sœur cadette de René"; it seems as permissible to see in Gustave the elder brother of Elvire, for the grace, the delicacy, the purity of Mme. de Krüdener's work have much in common with that of Lamartine, and

the contemporary who described her as the Muse of elegiac poetry was not indulging in mere complimentary hyperbole.

Apart from the careful psychology of her work, the ease and elegance of her style, Mme. de Krüdener stands rather aloof from the development of the *roman intime* in France; she is barely connected with the chain Cottin—de Souza—Duras, that links the novelists of the eighteenth century with S  nancour and Constant on the one hand, Nodier and George Sand on the other. The work of Mme. Cottin is as dead now as that of Mlle. de Scud  ry, yet it retains the historic interest of a faithful picture of contemporary society. Written after the Revolution, in the period of calm which preceded the Empire, *Claire d'Albe* (1799) and *Malvina* (1801) show the general weariness which rejected with disgust both the storm and stress of Wertherism and the clamorous horrors of novels of mystery and terror. In its delicate sensibility and its frail grace, the work of literature of this period is as *poitrinaire* as was ever the Muse of Sainte-Beuve: the influence of a Germany, dreamy and poetic, like that painted by Mme. de Sta  l, is present everywhere, and "l'attendrissement facile et la morale des bonnes   mes" are the order of the day. In the works of Mme. Cottin we find reminiscences of Richardson. The heroines have the *beau r  le*, their charm is the charm of suffering and weakness, and in weakness and strength alike they look back towards *Clarissa*. Yet it would hardly have been necessary to mention here these dainty but faded pastels, had it not been for their influence on Mme. de Sta  l; Corinne and Delphine, fatally predestined to unhappiness in spite of all their gifts of heart and mind, have something in common with the less brilliant but equally ill-fated Claire and Malvina.

In the exquisite miniatures of Mme. de Souza we find

the quintessence of the novel of the *ancien régime*. She wrote simply to amuse herself, without any thought of publication, and the matter of her novels was three-parts drawn from life; it was only the endings that she had to supply from her imagination—only the endings, therefore, contain anything of the *romanesque*. The words in which she describes her aim in writing might have been used by Mme. de La Fayette on the one hand, Sénancour and George Sand on the other, though in the words of the two moderns there would have been some *arrière pensée* of disenchantment or passion.

“[L’Auteur] a voulu seulement montrer de la vie ce qu’on n’y regarde pas. . . . Des jours, des années, dont le souvenir est effacé, ont été remplis d’émotions, de sentiments, de petits intérêts, de nuances fines et délicates. Chaque moment a son occupation, et chaque occupation a son ressort moral.”

Her works are classic in their interest in psychology; they are classic, too, in their universality. *Adèle de Sérange* appeared in 1793, when Mme. de Souza’s first husband had been guillotined and she herself was living a life full of anxiety and financial worries in England; yet it contains not the slightest reference to the great catastrophe—the noble and optimistic hero is left looking forward to a life of undisturbed happiness with the noble and optimistic heroine. *Charles et Marie* shows the effects of the Emigration only in so far as it gives a picture of English life and landscape, something in the style of Miss Burney; *Eugène et Mathilde*, sketched in darker tones, the most tragic and therefore the most realistic of her works, describes in a similar vein the author’s stay in Germany. Finally, we come to *Eugène de Rothelin*, the most artistic of her works, less personal than the others, which has been described as the romance of chivalry of

the eighteenth century, its *Tristan* or its *Petit Jehan de Saintré*. Written at the zenith of the Empire, to which Mme. de Souza never gave her adhesion, it, too, has all the placid happiness and calm optimism of *Adèle de Sénange*.

There is thus nothing Romantic about the work of Mme. de Souza, unless we dignify with the name of revolt a few suggestions scattered here and there in her novels that convention may press hard upon the individual; she hints at that favourite Romantic theme, the struggle between the rights of society and the rights of passion, but the common sense which ruled her character settles the dispute in favour of society. The novelty of her ideas attracted Mme. de Staël, but their timidity soon wearied her. There is, too, Romanticism of a sort in the character she gives her heroines; they are independent, but so unused to independence that they carry it off with an air of bravado; if they are not *femmes incomprises*, it is only because they talk so much that one cannot help knowing all about them. They preach to and at the heroes; but the heroes, being serious-minded young *doctrinaires*, rather enjoy the process, and return as good as they get.

Yet it would be the worst of blunders to imply that the novels of Mme. de Souza are either pedantic or wordy. On the contrary, her two great merits are the sobriety and precision of her style, the subtlety and vigour of her psychological analysis. The latter, indeed, has the defects of its qualities: she seems too often to complicate her characters for the mere pleasure of dissecting them later on and the extreme intricacy of her descriptions goes far to support the accusations of *marivaudage* that have been brought against her. Yet a dose of such *marivaudage* would have given a much-needed substance and consistency to the psychology of the Romantics.

Last among the writers of this class must be mentioned Mme. de Duras, who carries the traditions of the *ancien régime* over the Empire to the Restoration. In literature she uses the old form of the *roman intime* to express the new problems which had arisen as a result of the Revolution, just as in the society of the time her *salon* formed the link between extreme royalists and the constitutionalists of the *Globe*. *Ourika* (1824) is the story of a young negress brought up in Paris, yet prevented by her colour from ever entering fully into the life of her hosts. *Edouard*, which appeared in the following year, deals with the question of marriage between aristocrat and plebeian—a problem which was to occupy George Sand a few years later. But Mme. de Duras never cedes to the romanesque or drags in a happy ending in defiance of all probability. She recognises the power of social prejudice; it has been suggested, indeed, that her realisation of it was due to personal experience—the daughter of Kersaint, a colleague of Lafayette and a noble regarded in aristocratic circles as a traitor to his order, she quite possibly suffered from her father's unpopularity during the first days of the Emigration. In any case her novels are almost Cornelian and reminiscent of the *Princesse de Clèves* in their devotion to duty and *gloire*: even when the Breton sensibility and passion of their author revolt against the yoke, she never thinks of throwing it off. It need hardly be added that this conception of society did not appeal to the Romantics; yet, as we have said, it exerted a considerable influence on the social philosophy of George Sand.

Our account of this group of writers of the old *régime* will have revealed at once their strength and their weakness. In praising them all one makes use of exactly the same expressions. Fresh and delicate psychology, limpidity and sobriety of style, careful graduation of

shades, a grace that is none the less real because it is the essence of artificiality—such qualities as these characterise the Northern Mme. de Krüdener and the Breton Mme. de Duras as much as those two more typical representatives of eighteenth-century society, Mmes. Cottin and de Souza. And herein lies their chief failing: their simplicity becomes insipid, their harmony is monotonous, their psychological analysis is merely finicking. It is not always easy to distinguish Claire from Malvina, Adèle from Mathilde, Eugène from Edouard; Valérie and Gustave do indeed stand out more distinctly. It is no exaggeration to apply to them, as M. Maigron has done, Mme. de Staël's anecdote of the man at a masked ball who passed before a mirror, but was unable to discover which of the many domino-clad figures reflected in it was his own until he nodded his head to make sure.

The novel has now, indeed, returned to much the same condition as that in which it was left by Marivaux, and once again it is an influence from England which is to give it new life and colour. Scott, different as is his genius from that of Richardson, is nevertheless to perform a task in many ways similar to his. And not only does he renew the subject-matter of the novel. He raises it even above the rank it had occupied in the eighteenth century, when it was regarded as the most moral of all the *genres*: now it is considered at once the most moral, the most instructive, the most interesting, the most entertaining, and the most worthy of the attention of the statesman and philosopher. In a few years we leave behind the old idea that the novel is only a frivolous amusement suitable for the more brainless section of humanity, rubbish which any serious-minded man would be ashamed to be found reading. It is a far cry from *Claire*

d'Albe to the *Comédie Humaine*, but the historical novel inspired by Scott succeeds in bridging the gulf between them.

Unlike most English authors whose work crossed the Channel, Scott did not take France by storm. The first translations were received very calmly, partly because the style of their author Defauconpret was by no means attractive, still more because the originals were so different from anything then in vogue that the public was unable to assimilate them. Scott was an acquired taste, but, to borrow Montaigne's metaphor, appetite came with the eating. *Guy Mannering* was the first of the novels to be translated; Dumas père followed it up with a version of *Ivanhoe*, which Hugo praised in 1820 in the *Conservateur Littéraire*. The most popular in France of the Waverley Novels was naturally *Quentin Durward*. Its direct influence is seen in the *Louis XI.* of Delavigne and the *Charles VII.* of Dumas, and appears in a corner of *Notre Dame*; it seems to have modified also the Romantic conception of Louis XIII., as presented, for example, in *Cinq-Mars* and *Marion Delorme*. Hugo saw in it exactly what he wanted to see, "quelque chose de bizarre et de merveilleux." He praised the author for his love of the grotesque and his use of antithesis, his creation of the "dramatic novel," true to life, wedding philosophy to narrative.

It is hopeless to attempt to trace in detail the influence of Scott in French literature. History, poetry, the drama, are as strongly affected as the novel: not one of the great Romantic writers but praised and imitated him. Enthusiasm among the general public began in 1817; from 1820 to 1830 it was a *furor*. Scott's portrait was sold on the boulevards with that of Byron; his bust was found in every bookshop; operas and pictures were drawn

ad infinitum from his works; tartan became the *dernier cri* of fashion; antlers and otter-skins adorned the entrance halls of all up-to-date houses. The theatres profited from the general vogue; according to Pontmartin, on one and the same evening the Théâtre Français was producing *Louis XI. à Péronne*; the Odéon, *Le Labyrinthe de Woodstock*; the Opéra Comique, *Leicester*, adapted by Scribe and Auber from *Kenilworth*, and followed the next evening by *La Dame Blanche*, based on *The Monastery* and *Guy Mannering*. According to Stendhal, Scott had over two hundred disciples in France; equally significant is the terrible fact that from April to August of 1822 no less than one hundred and fifty historical novels were published. Balzac, in describing the literary efforts of Lucien de Rubempré in *Illusions Perdues*, explains how it was done. All one had to do was to write a book containing an archer, preferably Scottish, and a Valois, preferably decadent, label it as a "roman historique dans le genre de Walter Scott," and leave the rest to the publishers.

Though none of the earlier imitators of Scott deserve in themselves to be remembered, it is interesting to notice the names of some of their works as catalogued by M. Maigron. Among the most typical are: *Isabelle et Jean d'Armagnac* (in four volumes); *La Trémouille, Chevalier sans Peur et sans Reproche* (in three); *Montluc ou le Tombeau Mystérieux*; *Les Ruines de Rothembourg*; *Edouard et Elfride, ou la Comtesse de Salisbury, Roman Historique du XIVe. Siècle*; *Alfred le Grand ou le Trône Reconquis*; *Le Serf du XVe. Siècle*—which last attempts, without any great success, to serve up equal doses of *Ivanhoe* and the *Contrat Social*. None of these works is truly historical: they belong rather to the wildly romanesque school represented in England by *The Scottish Chiefs* and *The Days*

of *Bruce*—if any historic event or character appears, it is merely because the author cannot think of another way of getting the hero out of a tight corner. Even Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and *Han d'Islande* are of this type, aggravated still further by the influence of the novel of mystery and terror. In view of contemporary taste, one can quite understand their early vogue; one can understand, too, that the *Globe* found it necessary to warn its readers that neither was a product of true Romanticism. But in general the readers refused to be warned; their attitude was that of Musset-Pathay, who headed his *Contes historiques* with the epigraph "*Multa incredibilia vera, multa credibilia falsa.*"

All these works, then, while pointing out the direction in which the Romantic novel will develop, do not themselves assist in its development. Far more significant is the work of Sismondi and of Balzac. In 1822 the former produced *Julia Severa ou l'An 492*. He constantly alleges the example of Scott; like Scott, he indulges in epigraphs at the head of his chapters. The accuracy of his historical and social reconstructions is remarkable; one is quite prepared to believe that he read Gregory of Tours three times before starting to write. His novel is, indeed, weighed down by its erudition; some of the chapters are little more than historical monographs. His failure was inevitable, yet, if he failed, his attempt at any rate taught authors to take history more seriously; henceforth the historical novel will be bolstered up with an imposing mass of documentary evidence, sometimes relegated to the notes, too often raising its head in the texts.

Balzac considered Scott, the creative genius, far greater than Byron, the merely destructive; and *Les Chouans* makes it seem probable that had he chosen he could himself have become the Scott of France. But *L'Héritière de*

Birague and *Clotilde de Lusignan*, the only two of his novels which come within the scope of this chapter, foreshadow neither *Les Chouans* nor that first of the series of great historical novels, *Cinq-Mars*. They are, rather, the sort of work that Lucien de Rubempré might have turned out, and no doubt the projected *Démence de Charles VI. et la Faction Armagnac ou Bourguignonne*; *La Conspiration d'Amboise*, *La Saint-Barthélemy*, would have been of much the same type. Balzac is, strangely enough, weak in descriptions, and that in spite of all his careful reading; his work is marred, too, by copious digressions, moralisings, and philosophisings à la Dumas père.

Yet, on the other hand, he has some of the characteristics of Scott, in both manner and matter. Among the former must be mentioned his copious use of epigraphs—here he improves on his master, and has, not one, but several to every chapter—and his equally copious use of oaths with the true Romantic ring: “By the tail of the Lion of St. Mark” is a particularly pleasing specimen. But there are more serious resemblances than these; if Balzac has not Scott’s gift for resuscitating an epoch in all its life and colour, his story is at least vivid and animated. The action goes forward with a swing; the dialogue has something of the vigour of Scott’s; the crowd is well drawn, and the profiles half seen in the background are firmly sketched in with their individual peculiarities. Then, too, Balzac knows his facts: he takes as much trouble over verifying a detail in the history of the Middle Ages as he was to take later over the topography of Saumur or Tours. Here his influence works in the same direction as that of Sismondi: the novel is raised to the dignity of history; documentary research saves it from becoming a mere *feuilleton*, just as the Alexandrine tries to save Romantic tragedy from becoming melodrama.

Further than this we need not go. The great harvest-time of the Romantic novel is at hand: George Sand is about to gather up the work of the women novelists and add it to what she has gleaned from Rousseau and Chateaubriand; from Scott will proceed both the historical novels of Vigny, Hugo, Mérimée, Dumas, and the realistic novels of Balzac, "history in the present tense." And if *Obermann* and *Adolphe* seem to be left on one side, we know that it is only for a time; their day will come in the lean years following 1830.

CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DRAMA

WE have already seen that in the realms of the novel the triumph of Romanticism was complete by 1820. As far as psychology is concerned, indeed, its victory might be antedated to 1762 and the succeeding years, with *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the translations of Sterne, the sombre productions of Baculard d'Arnaud and Loaisel de Tréogat; and even if we consider externals, we must admit that there was little for the Romantics to add to the riot of local and historical colour presented to them in the works of Bernardin and Chateaubriand. The more we study the eighteenth century in its novels and memoirs, the more we realise how thoroughly Romantic it was in sentiment; yet, by a very natural contradiction, in questions of art it remained obstinately Classic. In all the older *genres*, consecrated by the traditions of centuries, the rules reigned supreme and innovations were taboo: we have seen, for example, how the attempts of the "nature" poets broke down utterly before the blank wall of convention; how it was only at the end of his life, when he was writing for himself and not for glory, that Chénier abandoned his project of making "vers antiques"; how the renewal of elegiac poetry was hampered in Millevoye by the timidities of pseudo-classic taste.

But of all literary types, one would expect the drama to be the home of lost causes: it requires, perhaps, the

most finished technique; it is bound by its very nature to the use of convention and symbolism; furthermore, in France that convention had been consecrated by the work of some of the greatest of her writers. It is easy to blame the lack of enterprise of the pseudo-classics, yet at any rate there was in their attitude an admirable humility which the Romantics might well have copied. From 1760 to 1820, perhaps every other member of the audiences that applauded Voltaire, Arnault, Jouy, M.-J. Chénier, was in private an emotional and imaginative soul, a devotee of the most "*sensible*" of novelists, yet as bodies they rejected the ideals which as individuals they accepted—the tyranny of society was at least as strong as the tyranny of the rules.

Mme. de Staël was thus right in directing her attacks against the drama, as being the main citadel of classicism; she saw that it constituted an impassable barrier to any advance—it was the Bastille of the literary Revolution. Hence the vigour of the blows she showers on the Unities; hence her implacable hostility towards what seem at first sight the most trifling details of stage technique: the fate of Romanticism is bound up in the fate of the least of these. Reference has already been made to the reforms she advocates in *De l'Allemagne*—abolition of the rules and the Unities, of the distinction between tragedy and comedy, choice of subjects from Northern and mediæval history, imitation of the great dramatists of England and Germany. At first her words bore little fruit: they aroused violent discussion, but few authors, even among those who applauded her theories, took the trouble to translate them into facts. Under the Empire there was a reaction towards the strictest classicism, under the Bourbons an attempt at "*la tragédie selon la Charte*," exemplified best in the works of Delavigne and Nepo-

mucène Lemercier; it was not till 1830 that "tout quatre-vingt-treize éclata" with the success of *Hernani*.

We have grown so accustomed to speaking of the "Bataille d'Hernani" that we are apt to regard it as the one decisive blow in the struggle, as the blast of the trumpets which shattered the walls of the old literary régime; yet, to continue this metaphor of Hugo's, the hosts of Romanticism had first encircled the city seven times without any apparent effect, amid the jeers of its defenders. It will be useful, then, to consider the work of the pioneers, the "enfants perdus," completely forgotten now, who were in their day hated as revolutionaries by the genuine Classics, and despised by the *jeunes France* as trimmers and opportunists. Slight as is the intrinsic value of their plays, they derived, none the less, a considerable momentum from mere weight of numbers and mere force of persistence. Foreign influence—that of Shakespeare, Byron and Scott, that of Schiller and Goethe—appears in their work, but it appears only in an external imitation which does not affect their poetic system; it may therefore be left on one side until we consider the birth of Romantic drama proper.

We may dismiss in a few words the work of those hardened pseudo-classics, Arnault, Jouy, Ancelot. In it there appears constantly the influence of contemporary politics. Arnault writes a quite inoffensive tragedy on Germanicus; it is produced in 1817, and the Restoration Government, too nervous to be judicious, immediately censors it for its supposed allusions to Napoleon and its appeals to Napoleon's "legions." In the next year, Jouy's *Bélisaire* arouses another storm: *Bélisaire* is Moreau and Justinien is Bonaparte—hence renewed activity in official circles. The same author's *Sylla*, in 1821, is the occasion of one of Talma's greatest triumphs,

chiefly because he appears in it adorned with a wig of the genuine Napoleonic type; already the Imperial legend is developing, hostility to the new régime is becoming more evident. In Ancelot, however, the Ultras find a poet after their own heart: *Louis IX.* symbolises the alliance between Throne and Altar, and is applauded as a counterblast to the *Vêpres Siciliennes* of the too liberal Delavigne. Yet though, besides the works just mentioned, Arnault produced a Venetian *Blanche et Montcassin*, a Gaelic *Oscar*, *Fils d'Ossian*; though the author of *Bélisaire* was also the author of *Tippo-Saëb*; though Ancelot imitated Schiller in *Fiesque* and introduced Shakespeare and local colour into *Elisabeth d'Angleterre*, it is not here that we find the origins of the Romantic drama: tragedy at this epoch is just what Hugo called it—"un classique jacobin: un bonnet rouge sur une perruque."

The works of Soumet were similar in kind, but must be noticed apart because they were different in inspiration—though it must be admitted that only their intentions are excellent. In drama, as in lyric poetry, Soumet stands for the reawakening of the South: one remembers that his successes at the *Jeux Floraux* of Toulouse were as great as those of Hugo—the latter, indeed, never rose to the heights of a poetic discourse on *La Découverte de la vaccine*—and that Restoration critics preferred his elegies to those of Lamartine. In 1823 two of his plays were produced simultaneously, and Talma only refused to act in *Saül* because the part of Oreste in *Clytemnestre* was even more attractive. Hugo thought this latter tragedy the best that had appeared for half a century—no hyperbolic praise after all, if one considers what its rivals were—while *Saül* is "as severe as a classic tragedy and as interesting as a

German drama." Soumet, we see, had the same aspirations as Lebrun, whose *Marie Stuart*, imitated from Schiller, was an attempt—quite unsuccessful—at “un rapprochement entre la Melpomène étrangère et la nôtre—deux muses qui semblaient ennemies irréconciliables.” Even after the *rapprochement*, alas! they continued to cut one another whenever they could. In 1825 came the first of Soumet's two great triumphs: devotion to Throne and Altar, the revival of interest in the Middle Ages, some vague presentiment of the July Revolution—all these causes combined to assure the striking success of *Jeanne d'Arc*. Joan is *sensible* like any Romantic heroine, but perhaps the most Romantic touch is the division of the play into the five acts—for Soumet cannot yet rise to calling them “pictures”—entitled *La Captivité*, *La Torture*, *Le Tribunal*, *Le Jugement de Dieu*, *Le Bûcher*. Lastly, in 1829 all Paris applauded Soumet's revised version of *Britannicus*, just as a few years later it was to welcome in Dumas' *Charles VII.* an improvement on *Andromaque*. *Une Fête de Néron* takes up the struggle between Nero and Agrippina where Racine left it. Local colour is everywhere: Seneca philosophises at some length, and Locusta and Poppœa play important parts. Not a single agony is spared, and the death of Agrippina, who comes to expire with much gore and unpleasant realism at the foot of Nero's statue, made the *Quotidienne* exclaim in disgust: “Horreur pour horreur, mieux vaut encore l'oreiller d'Othello.”

By the not unexpected irony of fate, the most genuine precursor of the Romantics, Nepomucène Lemercier, was also the one who was most bitterly opposed to Romanticism and all its works. When he was congratulated on the brilliance of his literary “children,” he retorted with: “Oui, des enfants trouvés.” In 1821, after the success of

his unorthodox *Frédégonde et Brunehaut*, he protested vehemently to those who suspected him of Romantic leanings: all he had done, he said, was to prove that by a strict adherence to the rules and a close study of human passions one could produce more moving effects than those attained by "les écarts et les indépendances du genre nommé romantique." But nobody believed him: it was in vain that he referred critics to his *Cours de littérature*, published in 1817—"on opposa ma propre théorie dans ma chaire à ma pratique au théâtre, et l'on vanta le professeur en moi, pour mieux déprimer le poète." He might indeed reiterate his respect for tradition, endeavour to prove that he had never violated the Unities, point out that he had very properly relegated his more daring plays to the outer darkness of the minor theatres—"on ne s'obstina pas moins à m'appeler novateur."

And his contemporaries were right, as an examination of his works will show, though the modern reader, accustomed to the far greater audacities of the Romantics, may find them mild enough. His choice of subject recalls the recommendations of Voltaire and foreshadows the practice of Hugo. *Ophis* is an Egyptian tragedy, written in the days when Lemercier was still on good terms with General Bonaparte, the First Consul; *Isule et Orovèse* deals with the Druids of ancient Gaul, and suggests—at a distance, certainly—the Velléda episode in *Les Martyrs*; *Charlemagne*, *Clovis*, *Frédégonde et Brunehaut*, *Louis IX. en Egypte*, *La Dépenance de Charles VI.*, are drawn from mediæval French history; *Le Frère et la Sœur Jumeaux* (*Twelfth Night*) and *Richard III. et Jeanne Shore* show the influence of Shakespeare; *Christophe Colomb* and *Pinto*, the two most characteristic of his plays, are eminently Romantic conceptions.

Both of these plays are good examples of the new

genre—historic comedy—which Lemer cier claimed to have invented, and in which the Romantics followed him. His aim he declared in the Preface to *Pinto*: “dépouiller une grande action de tout ornement poétique qui la déguise . . . présenter des personnages agissant et parlant comme on le fait dans la vie . . . rejeter le prestige quelquefois infidèle de la tragédie et des vers heureux.” It would have been easy enough, he adds, to build on the subject of the Duke of Braganza’s conspiracy a gloomy and therefore successful play; it has seemed to him more true to life, as well as more difficult, to treat it in the spirit of comedy.

“What dire events from trifling causes spring!” might well be his motto, as it is the *motif* of Scribe’s *Verre d’Eau*; and the two plays have much in common in their free-and-easy portrayal of the great and their malicious realisation of the power behind the throne. Even more interesting, however, is the comparison of *Pinto* with *Figaro*: *Pinto* is *Figaro*, but instead of arranging the marriage of Rosine and the Count, or his own marriage with Suzanne, he happens to be occupied in overthrowing a dynasty. His object is changed: his character and his methods remain the same as ever—a great deal of fooling, a great deal of talk, and behind the talk a prodigious amount of plotting and wire-pulling.

Christophe Colomb, his “comédie shakespearienne,” is the only one of his plays in which Lemer cier will own to having violated the rules. He admits that his first act takes place at the port of Pinos, the second in Queen Isabella’s council-chamber, the third—horror of horrors!—in the cabin of Columbus’ ship off the coast of America; yet even here he has ready an excuse which recalls the subtleties of Corneille—“il y a unité de lieu, le monde entier est le domaine de Colomb.” The reasoning was

ingenious, but the die-hards were unmoved by it: in a riot at the second performance a spectator was crushed to death, and it was only under the protection of guards with fixed bayonets that the piece reached even its eleventh representation. There was more to enrage the critics than this cavalier treatment of the Unities: the element of comedy, almost of farce, is supplied by the explorer's wife Beatrix, who wishes she had never married a genius, and by the doctor, who offers her a prescription guaranteed to cure her husband's wild fancies by abolishing his indigestion. The language of the play, too, is anything but "noble"—witness the famous couplet which describes the prospective fate of Columbus:

"Bientôt du haut du pont lancé par ces coquins
Ils le feront descendre au pays des requins."

But perhaps the quaintest of all the criticisms of the play was that expressed by Geoffroy—there was too much method in its madness: he had expected far more noise and nonsense in a "Shakespearian" comedy; if Lemer cier must violate the laws of reason, at least let him do it thoroughly!

Enough has been said to show the importance of Lemer cier's innovations, and, judging his plays on their merits, one would be inclined to attribute to them far more influence than they actually possessed. *Pinto* has been well described as "un soir sans lendemain": it came too soon, and its author was too far ahead of his contemporaries to affect them to any extent. Cast off by the Classics, he disdained to join the forces of Romanticism, and because he was isolated he was also powerless. Hugo may have thought of *Pinto* when sketching the rôle of Don César de Bazan in *Ruy Blas*; Musset's Fantasio plays a very similar part in arranging—or disarranging—affairs of

state; but in general the Romantics went farther afield for their models, and thought of Lemer cier—if they thought of him at all—as a second Arnault or Ancelot.

Very different in both temperament and theories was Delavigne, the poet of the *juste milieu*, the representative in literature of the moderate and compromising policy of the July monarchy. Lemer cier was a Jacobin turned into a law-abiding citizen; Delavigne, by nature a respectable *bourgeois*, incapable of either reaction or reform. A spirit of independence, a quixotic opposition to the powers that be, distinguished Lemer cier as much in his relations with the Bourbons as in his relations with Bonaparte; Delavigne was a timid and docile individual, very sensitive to criticism, who never wrote a play without first obtaining the approval of a family council, which later on revised the manuscript. Considering the constant influence of the fraternal scissors-and-paste, one is not surprised at the limitations of his work: correct, ingenious, talented, it cannot rise far above the average, because it often offers no more than a synthesis of the views of his able but mediocre critics.

The only point of contact between Lemer cier and Delavigne was, unfortunately, their common hostility towards the Romantics; and Delavigne at least was in a position to do them harm. He obstinately refused his vote when Hugo was seeking election to the Academy, and his criticisms of Dumas were even more bitter—with reason: “c’est mauvais, ce que fait ce diable de Dumas, mais cela empêche de trouver bon ce que je fais.” And the Romantics paid him back in kind: he did well, said Sainte-Beuve, to call *Marino Faliero* a melodrama, for it was nothing more—“romantisme à l’écorce, absence de conviction poétique.” Even more conclusive is the faint praise accorded by Hugo in the

address to Sainte-Beuve elected to the Academy in the very place of Delavigne: the dramatist's style, he says, possessed dignity and elegance, occasional grace, continual clearness; he had, as it were, traced a circle round his destiny, as he had traced one round his inspiration. He lived as he thought, under shelter—and one can imagine the contempt with which he was regarded by the stormy petrels of Romanticism, a contempt which resembles the attitude of Byron to Cowper.

From the beginning of his career Delavigne was as consistently successful as Lemer cier had been consistently unfortunate. In 1818 had appeared the *Messéniennes*, the poems which expressed the revolt of France against the humiliations caused by the fall of the Empire, the Allied occupation, the return of the Bourbons under the ægis of their country's traditional foes. Hence, in the following year, when the "new Tyrtæus" produced his *Vêpres Siciliennes*, he was assured of a favourable hearing. The play was in itself well calculated to please an audience in which discontent with the new régime was already smouldering: an eloquent plea for the rights of small nations, it succeeded in presenting the French as lawless aggressors, and in capturing the sympathies of the public for the oppressed Italians—the Liberals felt that in applauding the destruction of the tyrant of the thirteenth century they were dealing a blow at the would-be tyrant of the nineteenth. From the literary point of view, also, it was so mildly progressive as to succeed where downright revolution would have failed: super-Cornelian heroism is served up in correct and often energetic verse, embellished by much local colour of the usual pre-Romantic kind. Exactly the same recipe is followed in Delavigne's next topical success. *Le Paria*, of which the hero is a noble-minded Pariah and the

villain a haughty and unscrupulous Brahmin, attacks at once the growing arrogance of the nobles and the growing activities of the ultramontane Congrégation, which were viewed with alarm by all good Liberals "selon la Charte."

The author was henceforward a marked man. By a piece of that petty spite which did so much to alienate the loyalty of the rising generation, he was deprived of a small sinecure which Louis XVIII. had created specially for him—a reactionary Government was too strong for the liberal-minded King. Hence a natural increase in the popularity of the victim—reflected glory, too, for the Duke of Orleans, who had adroitly offered Delavigne his support, delighted at the opportunity of giving a lesson to the elder branch of the family. It is hardly surprising that political allusions were sought by mischief-makers in Delavigne's masterpiece, *Marino Faliero*. Charles X. himself was most agitated—he felt sure that the Doge's conspiracy against the Venetian Republic foreshadowed Louis-Philippe's defection from his own cause, and all the assurances of his cousin failed to restore his calm. The Ultras improved on the views of the King: according to the *Gazette de France*, Delavigne's play menaced the total subversion of the whole order of society; it was a "véhicule politique pour diriger les masses populaires dans le sens de la Révolution."

Yet as soon as the passions of the time had died down, satisfied by the July Revolution, it became evident that *Marino* was as little subversive in politics as in art; it came to be recognised for what it actually was, the most obvious of all the compromises between Classic tragedy and Romantic drama. Its Preface confesses as much, and confesses also the poet's inability to decide between the two opposing ideals. "Deux systèmes partagent la

littérature. Dans lequel des deux cet ouvrage a-t-il été composé?—c'est ce que je ne déciderai pas et ce qui d'ailleurs me paraît être de peu d'importance." In three respects, however, the play certainly is Romantic: it uses and misuses local colour—without, for the rest, giving any illusion of reality—it hovers doubtfully on the borders of tragedy and melodrama, and it borrows copiously from the foreign writers admired by the Romantics. According to one of the critics, *Marino Faliero* is nothing but a mosaic, and the author must be congratulated on the excellence of his memory, for no one would venture to accuse the exuberance of his imagination. His borrowings are, in fact, so numerous as to give some colour to the charge of plagiarism: he owes more to Byron than he is ready to admit, but we find also reminiscences of Shakespeare's *Othello* and Schiller's *Wallenstein*, while situations from his own plays—the *Vêpres* and *L'Ecole des Vieillards*, for example—appear once more in only a slightly different form. We may admit, then, that the play is by no means a masterpiece, just as its author is by no means a genius; yet at the same time we cannot deny that it marks a stage in the progress of Romanticism, and that, if the Romantics far surpassed it, they were able to learn from it also.

We turn now to the development of dramatic theory, a subject that can soon be disposed of, since the *Préface de Cromwell* marks little real advance on the theories of Mme. de Staël, and Stendhal's *Racine et Shakespeare* is merely a brilliant *jeu d'esprit*, witty and provocative, often impertinent too. One can hardly take seriously his definition of Romantic literature as the literature which pleases contemporaries, while Classic literature is that which pleased their great-grandfathers. Stendhal

was asking for trouble, more for the joy of battle than from any settled convictions, and he got what he wanted: his thesis had one of the liveliest *succès de scandale* of the day.

He must, however, be granted the merit of having reawakened an interest in Shakespeare: he praises his use of prose, his use of the *mot propre*, his substitution of unity of interest for the three traditional unities, and claims for French tragedy a similar freedom. We have seen already that eighteenth-century dramatists had imitated Shakespeare's technique without attempting to understand his spirit: how should they suppose that "ce boucher de Shakespeare" possessed anything so rational as a philosophic system? Hence they piled up external resemblances, and in trying to produce Shakespearian tragedy they evolved nothing more elevated than the melodramas of Pixérécourt and Bouchardy. The Romantics, on the other hand, were so impressed with the importance of his theories that they exaggerated their scope; in their mind everything in his work was to be explained by his supposed love of the grotesque and his supposed use of antithesis and symbol. The most trifling discrepancy, the most obvious defect in style or blunder in taste, were not to be dismissed with the commonplace explanation that the poet must have nodded; his aberrations must have some wondrous hidden meaning, and in tracking it down through jungles of allegory and wildernesses of barren conjecture the Romantics showed a perverted ingenuity worthy of the tortuous symbolism of their own plays.

Shakespeare had by now recovered from the disgrace into which he had fallen during the pseudo-classic reaction: the hostile reception accorded the English actors in 1822 was practically the last of the demonstrations against him. Even at this period his fame was steadily

gaining ground, and the fury of the Classic attack was the fury of despair. In 1821 appeared Guizot's revision of Letourneur's translation—a version at once accurate and literary, the influence of which on the development of the Romantic drama has yet to be adequately estimated. In his *Shakespeare et son Temps*, Guizot joined with Stendhal in praising the poet at the expense of the Classic dramatists, and agreed that his great merit lay in the unity of impression of his plays. About this time, too, Schlegel's Vienna lectures on Dramatic Art at last came into their own. They had been translated as early as 1814, but the author's very unjust treatment of French tragedy, as well as his connection with Mme. de Staël, then at the height of her unpopularity, had at first minimised their influence. Now, however, they were received with more favour, and the Romantics were ready to outdo Schlegel himself in grotesque abuse of Racine and exaggerated praise of Shakespeare and Calderon.

Thus it was that when more English actors visited Paris in 1826, they met with a very different welcome. Everywhere there was the utmost enthusiasm; the theatre was crowded night after night, and between the acts discussion waxed fast and furious. The whole season was a continuous triumph—a triumph destined to be repeated in the following years. A special edition of the acting version of the plays was published side by side with a French translation, that the audience might follow word for word, so great was its zeal. The reception which Paris had given Garrick some fifty years before was eclipsed now by the reception accorded to Kean and Macready, Terry and Miss Smithson. One can hardly over-estimate the importance of these performances in the development of Romanticism. They inspired not only the poets, but artists like Delacroix and musicians like Berlioz. Thanks

to them, the great French actors, Firmin and Mlle. Mars at their head, succeeded in throwing aside the classical mannerisms that still clung to them: the castes of *Hamlet* and *Othello* showed the way to the castes of *Henri III.* and *Hernani*. With the Romantic dramatists themselves Shakespeare now becomes less a battle-cry than a model; they copy his work instead of merely using his name as a weapon in their prefaces. *Cromwell* is obviously based on Shakespeare, and on Shakespeare acted rather than Shakespeare read; it was during the season of 1826 that Dumas learned, as he ingenuously put it, "to construct a world"; and Hugo and Dumas decided the direction to be taken by the new movement.

But the name of Shakespeare was not the only one inscribed on its banners; the influence of the German dramatists, and of Goethe and Schiller in particular, was almost equally important. It was not until 1829 that the *Globe* magnanimously urged: "Essayons Schiller et Goethe, ainsi que Shakespeare; ils peuvent faire le frais de notre éducation et l'avancer beaucoup." Its exhortations, however, came rather late in the day; the German writers had been vehemently discussed ever since the appearance of *De l'Allemagne* in 1810. They were, indeed, discussed and admired very much at second hand: of French men of letters of the time, only Emile Deschamps, Blaze de Bury, and Gérard de Nerval were well acquainted with their language. Even Nodier, so sympathetic and so "septentrional," had to rely on the good offices of the translator; Sainte-Beuve dabbled in German literature, but later on confessed how little real knowledge he possessed of "les affaires d'outre Rhin" and how much he owed to Nerval, that unwearied "commercial traveller between Paris and Munich." As to Hugo, the story goes that one fine day, when asked

if he had read Goethe, he blandly replied: "Non, mais j'ai lu Schiller; c'est la même chose."

Nevertheless, we must admit that if direct knowledge of German literature was slight, the subject was very much in the air at the time. Germanism accorded well with mediævalism; the feudal barons of the Rhine were popular twenty years before the days of *Les Burgraves*—some ardent souls affected to regard them as long-lost ancestors. Up to 1830, however, even this general influence was almost entirely restricted to the theatre. We find translations of certain of the lyrics of Schiller and Goethe in the *Spectateur du Nord* of 1800, the *Mercure de France* of 1804 and 1813, the *Mercure Etranger* of 1814 and 1815. The *Lied von der Glock* was translated in 1795, twice in 1808, again in 1816; Bürger's *Lenore* in 1814, though from an English, not a German, version. But apart from these few exceptions, German lyric poetry was at this period practically unknown in France; being the most national of all the *genres*, it was naturally the last to become acclimatised abroad. As a whole, it influenced the Parnassians rather than the Romantics, who saw it chiefly through the eyes of Byron, Scott, and the Lake Poets.

Götz von Berlichingen was the only one of Goethe's plays to exert a considerable influence on French drama. When Ramond first translated it in 1780, it was considered even more confused and barbaric than Shakespeare, but in 1787 the *Mercure de France* discovered in it "de grandes beautés de détail, une fidèle peinture des mœurs du siècle, et de la vérité dans les caractères." Until Mme. de Staël, however, Goethe as a dramatist did not count in France, and it was not until ten years after *De l'Allemagne* that his complete dramatic works were translated by Stapfer (1821-1825). *Götz* now enjoyed a considerable vogue: its Shakespearean painting of the

Middle Ages influenced Mérimée in the *Théâtre de Clara Gazul* and *La Jacquerie*, Vitet in his chronicle plays, *Les Barricades* and *Les Etats de Blois*, Hugo and Dumas almost everywhere. To it may be traced much Romantic mediævalism and love of local colour; the influence of Goethe reinforces that of Shakespeare and Scott.

Faust was not at first popular in France; even Mme. de Staël was overwhelmed by it, and confessed that it was quite magnificent, but also rather bewildering. Its fame was hardly increased by two mediocre translations which appeared in 1823, but five years later the excellent prose version of Gérard de Nerval, which won the praise of Goethe himself, revealed the true *Faust*, and revealed it as a masterpiece. Already the *Globe* had described it as the greatest drama since Shakespeare, and Hugo had added it to his anti-classic arsenal in the *Préface de Cromwell*. According to Gautier, all the *jeune France* were intoxicated with it—"on s'initiait aux mystères du *Faust* de Goethe, qui contient tout, selon l'expression de Mme. de Staël, et même quelque chose d'un peu plus que tout": a statement which may well be taken with a grain of salt. The mysteries of *Faust* remained mysteries as far as the *jeune France* were concerned. In any case it affected drama far less than lyric and epic, and Musset's *La Coupe et les Lèvres* remains, with the operas of Gounod and Berlioz, the only trace it has left on the French stage.

The influence of Schiller was more immediate and more real than that of Goethe. For many years his fame was due solely to *Die Räuber*, the anti-social theme of which appealed strongly to Revolutionary France, embodying as it did Rousseau's doctrine of the return to Nature, combined with the more destructive hostility to law and order which one associates rather with the name of Byron.

It won for its author the title of French citizen, which he received in 1792 with Priestley, Paine, and various other leading lights of republicanism abroad—though, to be sure, his gratification might well have been damped at finding himself described in the decree as “le sieur Gille, publiciste allemand.” Even during the Revolution *Die Räuber* was considered too violent to be presented on the stage; it appeared in a modified form as *Robert et Maurice ou les Brigands*, a crude melodrama, which M.-J. Chénier regarded as threatening the whole future of French tragedy. *Kabale und Liebe*, translated in 1802, inspired a certain number of imitations, but is chiefly remarkable for having provoked the unfortunate comment of the *Décade philosophique*: “Il serait très fâcheux que nos jeunes écrivains prissent Schiller pour leur modèle. Ce serait vouloir nous remettre au gland, quand nous avons le blé.”

Don Carlos was imitated by M.-J. Chénier and Soumet, neither of whom came near doing it justice; *Wallenstein*, badly translated and abridged by Constant in 1809, had some influence on Dumas' *Christine*. It was only with *Maria Stuart* that Schiller won a secure place in France. We have already mentioned the great success of Lebrun's version, which struck a blow for Romanticism in spite of the timidity of its author. *Maria Stuart* is, for the rest, that one of Schiller's plays which is the closest to the classic ideal. Its technique is excellent: the dramatist is not paralysed by the poet and the philosopher, and the accurate study of history is subordinated to the portrayal of a crisis of passion. Henceforward Schiller was regarded as the mediator between Classics and Romantics, the link between Shakespeare and Racine; and, strange to relate, his work was admired instead of being repudiated by both parties. The *Jungfrau von Orleans* inspired

Soumet's *Jeanne d'Arc* of 1825, and had some influence on *Charles VII. chez ses grands vassaux*, while with its rehabilitation of the Maid—hitherto thought of in France as the heroine of Voltaire's burlesque epic—it paved the way for Michelet. The popularity of *Wilhelm Tell* may be gauged from the fact that the *Globe* announced in matter-of-fact tones "six *Guillaume Tell* pour l'année 1828"—Scott himself never did better, even in his palmiest days. But the fate of the play is typical of the fate of Romantic drama in general: Pixérécourt turned it into a melodrama and Rossini into an opera.

On the whole, as we have said, the influence of the Germans was less important than that of Shakespeare. Schiller attracted the French public as being a Shakespeare with the crudities removed, yet, on the other hand, his genius was too feverish and capricious to be preferred to the calm and universality of the Englishman. The Romantics prided themselves on writing philosophical and symbolic dramas; but they were Frenchmen as well as metaphysicians, and in their wildest moments the national instinct for reason and clarity never left them altogether. Hence the more exalted philosophy and symbolism of Schiller and Goethe made comparatively little impression on them. Their own work was less sublime, but it was often better adapted for its immediate end, representation on the stage; it might or might not be inferior from the point of view of the poet, but in general it was superior from the point of view of the playwright. The chief influence of Schiller and Goethe was in the destruction of the rules; the affection of the Romantics for them was by no means entirely disinterested, and it seems possible that if they had not been needed as allies they might hardly have been welcomed as guests. Yet their influence was not purely

destructive; they opened up new vistas of history and romance, and helped to bring back idealism and sentiment to a nation that was sadly in need of both.

So far we have seen nothing more than the collecting of the various ingredients which will constitute the Romantic drama. A growing love of externalism, as represented by historical and local colour, indifference if not hostility to the rules, an inspiration lyric rather than dramatic, an appeal to the example—not the authority—of English and German writers against the authority of the writers of antiquity: all these elements are ready, waiting side by side for the poet's hand. The poet comes; and with *Hernani* and the *Préface de Cromwell* the new genre is born.

CHAPTER VII

THE RESTORATION—"TRÔNE ET AUTEL"

WITH the Restoration of 1815 we reach the literary period of Pre-Romanticism, the background against which is set Romanticism proper—that state of vague indecision which invariably succeeds the birth of a movement and the first realisation of its principles, and which continues until the voice can make itself heard which is to give it authoritative and lasting expression. With the men of the Restoration, Romanticism is fluid, unmoulded, inherent only, and not yet explicit. Clothed in the vague shape of a "Movement," it has yet to assume the definite proportions of a "School."

When the domination of Napoleon was a thing of the past, the literary world once more felt itself free. The treatment accorded by the Emperor to Mme. de Staël and Chateaubriand, his substitution of the newly created *Journal de l'Empire* as an official organ for all the wealth of an unfettered Press—these are typical of the period of the Empire. With the return of the Bourbons, not only did peace return and cause literature to flourish, but liberty, following in its wake, secured literature's abundant increase. Freedom of speech was possible; the pulpit was free; the Press was (comparatively) free; *salons* were once more opened—whether for the discussion of politics or of literature was quite immaterial.

"On ne saurait dire," writes a contemporary, "combien la vie intellectuelle qui débordait alors, dans ces soirées spirituelles et brillantes, enivrait cette génération si longtemps sevrée de toutes les libertés, même de celle de la conversation, à laquelle d'ailleurs les aliments manquaient."

It is not, then, surprising if the alliance between State and Church, Throne and Altar, which at the beginning of the new Bourbon *régime* was proclaimed by the Bishop of Troyes as its most fitting symbol became also the symbol of Pre-Romanticism.

The Bishop's exhortations certainly had their effect in the region of politics, so much so that the political alliance might almost be termed the cause (and not merely the concomitant) of the alliance in literature. It is true that Louis XVIII., fearing the ardour of his most loyal supporters as much as the rancour of his enemies, leaned for support upon the Liberals, until the latter were caught in their own wide net, and fell. Yet, although the friends of the *ancien régime* did not come into power until 1820, and although during the five years' interregnum of moderate government many of the propositions of the Ultra-Royalists were rejected, there was nevertheless a concordance between Church and State which the King showed no disposition to break. The participation of the King in Church rites and ceremonies and the activity of the politico-religious "Congregation," side by side with purely political measures, such as the repeal of the divorce laws, prepared the way for the grandiose projects of the Government of 1821.

The Royalist party, whose ultimate goal was the restoration of the *ancien régime*, and whose advocacy of the union between Throne and Altar proved ultimately fatal to the Throne, made it their business from the outset,

not only to press parliamentary measures of a religious or an ecclesiastical character, but also to cause crusades and missions to be organised throughout the country. Whatever effect these may have been intended to have in the furtherance of their authors' designs, they certainly established in the popular mind a feeling of the inseparableness of Church and State.

To these two causes, then, may be traced the devotion to *Trône et Autel* which characterises Pre-Romanticism. Both this indefinite period and the first years of the Romantic School are marked by the works of writers who are Liberal and Catholic.

"La société, telle que l'avait faite la révolution," says Victor Hugo in 1824, "a eu sa littérature, hideuse et inepte comme elle. Cette littérature et cette société sont mortes ensemble et ne revivront plus. L'ordre renaît de toutes parts dans les institutions; il renaît également dans les lettres. La religion consacre la liberté, nous avons des citoyens. La foi épure l'imagination, nous avons des poètes."

The great ideal of literature is once more what it was in primitive days—poets are nothing less than "des prêtres chantant les grandes choses de leur religion et de leur patrie."

Devotion to the Throne—to take these two traits separately—was fostered by Louis XVIII. in his patronage of letters. Lamartine, who compares him with Augustus, received a diplomatic post; Hugo was granted a pension; and these were by no means the only recipients of royal bounty. "Il vous faudra demander cela au comte de Provence," had been the usual reply of Louis XVI. when any daring spirit had raised a question of literature in a circle more interested in the arts of the hunter and the locksmith; and the Count of Provence was anxious to

retain as King the reputation for polite learning which he had rather easily acquired. His sympathies, like his whole character, were entirely Voltairean, yet he was impartial enough to favour the new school as well as the old. Only Chateaubriand held scornfully aloof, involved in intrigues over precedence with Decazes, and animated by an unconquerable mistrust of Talleyrand; and the King was piqued at not being asked for the favours which he was only too willing to grant.

The favoured *littérateurs* did not forget to return loyalty for generosity. We have only to read Hugo's earliest Odes to realise this: *La Vendée*; *Les Vierges de Verdun*, *Louis XVII.* (where the unhappy Prince is compared to the Son of God and apostrophised as "Roi couronné d'épines"), *La Mort du Duc de Berry* ("Le Meurtre, d'une main violente, brise les liens les plus sacrés"), *La Naissance du Duc de Bordeaux*, *Buonaparte* ("Il passa par la gloire, il passa par le crime, Et n'est arrivé qu'au malheur"), *La Guerre d'Espagne*, with its final eulogy of the Bourbons; *Les Funérailles de Louis XVIII.* where the King is lauded as "Ce roi si grand dans la souffrance" (qui a) "oublié ses maux pour nos malheurs"; and, lastly, *Le Sacre de Charles X.* ("son généreux frère"), which reaches a lofty height of loyalty and patriotism, saluting the newly crowned King as "prêtre et roi" and closing with the prayer:

"Prête à son front royal deux rayons de ta tête;
Mets deux anges à ses côtés."

Just as the Liberals reproached the young Hugo for "contemplating life from the point of view of a *salon* of the Faubourg Saint-Germain," so they complained that Lamartine was devoid of interest in the cause of liberty.

He himself, in a note to his *Ode sur la Naissance du duc de Bordeaux*, writes:

“J’étais de famille royaliste; j’avais servi dans les gardes du roi; j’avais accompagné à cheval le duc de Berri. . . . L’assassinat de ce prince, quelques années après, m’avait profondément remué. . . . La naissance de cet enfant parut une vengeance du ciel contre l’assassin, une bénédiction miraculeuse du sang des Bourbons.”

Even after the fall of the Monarchy, Lamartine remained loyal: “J’ai donné ma démission au nouveau souverain, pour n’avoir point à maudire ce que j’avais béni.” His royalist poems vie with Victor Hugo’s in their servile flattery of the reigning house. The newly born Duke of Bordeaux is hailed as “l’enfant du miracle, Héritier du sang d’un martyr.” The long and eloquent semi-dramatic *Chant du Sacre*, where the King is characteristically described as “Le maître de la terre, le serviteur de Dieu,” rivals Hugo’s poem in its loyalty of sentiments. *Bonaparte*, on the other hand, is a stern description of the dead Emperor’s character:

“Superbe, et dédaignant ce que la terre admire,
Tu ne demandais rien au monde que l’empire. . . .
Tu n’aimais que le bruit du fer, le cri d’alarmes. . . .
Tu grandis sans plaisir, tu tombas sans murmure.”

Unwilling to pronounce a summary judgment, he commends him to God “qui règne et qui couronne”:

“Son cercueil est fermé: Dieu l’a jugé. Silence!
Son crime et ses exploits pèsent dans la balance:
Que des faibles mortels la main n’y touche plus!”

Even this sombre poem, however, seemed too indulgent to the author, deeply moved as he was by loyalty to the Bourbons, and horror-stricken by Napoleon’s crimes against liberty of thought.

Chateaubriand, above all, though his enigmatical temperament makes the later history of his political activities most difficult to follow, was, at any rate after his rupture with Napoleon and during the Restoration, an ardent supporter of the Monarchy. His strictures on Napoleon in the *Mémoires* are severe, though not exaggerated:

"Il a péri par le côté même où il s'était cru fort, profond, invincible, lorsqu'il violait les lois de la morale en négligeant et dédaignant sa vraie force, c'est-à-dire ses qualités supérieures dans l'ordre et l'équité. . . . Il se trouva dépouillé de sa vigueur aussitôt qu'il entra dans les voies corrompues."

And if any expression of his firm faith in the Monarchy were necessary after a perusal of his part in events from 1815 to 1830, it might well be quoted from the beginning of *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons*: "Dieu lui-même marche à découvert à la tête des armées, et s'assied au conseil des rois."

It is never satisfactory, however, to rely only on the evidence of the princes of literature, who transcend their epoch as often as they express it; the ideas of the average man are likely to be best enunciated by the average man himself. Just as the reformers of the sixteenth century are faithfully reflected in their pamphlets, so the reformers of the nineteenth are to be seen in their journals. Even the freedom of the Press granted by the Charter was not absolute, and editors, at the best of times, had perforce to walk delicately; but, perhaps with some premonition of the bad days coming, they seem to have resolved to make the most of the liberty they still possessed. Hence an unparalleled activity in the world of journalism; everybody with a grievance or a hobby started a newspaper in which to air it; if a paper were suppressed by the

censorship, it reappeared at once under another name and more aggressive than ever. And though all this mass of literature is now dead, and for the most part buried in the dark corners of libraries, yet its merit is much greater than its fate would seem to imply. The journals of this epoch were not pedantically encyclopædic, like the *Bibliothèques* that preceded them, nor pedantically specialised, like the *Revues* by which they were followed. Those who produced them had a singular gift for envisaging literature in its relations with the development of society as a whole, and the passage of time has made few alterations to the perspective in which they saw it.

We need spend little time over those reviews which, like the *Constitutionnel* and the *Mercure du Dix-Neuvième Siècle*, were at once liberal and classic, though it is interesting to note that the former regarded Romanticism as "not an absurdity, but a malady, like somnambulism or epilepsy," while according to the latter the Romantic Muse was either a tearful Niobe or a persistent Fury. Both adopted towards the new writers an attitude of sorrow rather than of anger. They constantly besought them to abandon the doctrines which had crept in from England and Germany, and to return to the Classic fold of "les saines idées." Their anxiety to kill the fatted calf is at times quite ludicrous. It was only when their advances were definitely rejected that they changed their tactics and tried to kill the Prodigal Sons instead.

Far more influential were the journals representing that group of the Ultras whose political prejudices had been hardened by their sufferings during the Emigration, while their hearts had been opened to the influence of sensibility and melancholy. Their Catholicism, together with their feeling for the Middle Ages, forms the link between their love of the Monarchy and their love

for the sadness of things. First among their organs in point of time comes the *Conservateur Littéraire*, founded in 1819 by Abel and Victor Hugo as a literary supplement to Chateaubriand's moderate Royalist *Conservateur*. It continued to flourish until 1821, surviving by a year the *Conservateur* itself. The brothers wrote the greater part of it, but articles by Soumet and Antony Deschamps also appeared, and Vigny contributed a paper on Byron. Its principles may be judged by this extract from the Preface to Volume II. (1820):

"Nous continuerons donc de servir autant qu'il sera en nous le trône et la littérature; trop heureux si nous pouvons ranimer le goût des lettres et éveiller des jeunes talents; plus heureux encore si nous pouvons propager le royalisme et convertir aux saines doctrines de généreux caractères!"

Later Hugo collected the articles which he had written in it under the title *Journal d'un Jeune Jacobite*, hardly foreseeing the days when he was to be described by his mother's friends as a "jeune Jacobin."

The *Conservateur Littéraire*, however, is a mere prelude to the *Muse Française*, that most famous of all the Romantic journals, the organ of the first *Cénacle*, which, though it appeared only from 1823 to 1824, exercised as great an influence in the new movement as the longer-lived and more authoritative *Globe*. Everything about it is significant, from the title-page onwards. The said title-page—printed in mediæval black-letter, not, like the *Globe*, in downright Roman characters—is adorned with a woodcut of the Muse clad in a complete suit of armour, over which, however, she compromises so far as to wear a Grecian tunic. Her harp is in her hand; by her side are sword and lance and red cross shield; the rising sun appears in the background, but it is small, in com-

parison with the large and numerous stars which form her halo. The prospectus of the paper over which she presides is quite in keeping:

“La *Muse Française* est instituée principalement pour rallumer et entretenir ce feu sacré [de la poésie]. Des poètes dont le nom est déjà classique, d’autres, plus jeunes, recommandés par des triomphes récents, et qui sont aujourd’hui l’espoir et l’honneur de la scène ou de la lyre, lui apportent successivement leur tribut d’harmonie. Elle accueillera aussi les offrandes modestes de plusieurs de ses disciples encore peu connus du public . . . et de jeunes *Corinnes* . . . viendront à ce trophée poétique entremêler quelques fleurs détachées de leurs fraîches guirlandes.”

In the list of contributors we find, accordingly, the names of Classics like Ancelot, Chênedollé, Baour-Lormian, and Briffaut; among the Romantics and semi-Romantics those of Hugo, Soumet, Guiraud, Vigny, Nodier, Antony Deschamps. The “jeunes Corinnes” are represented by Mesdames Desbordes-Valmore, Sophie Gay, and her daughter Delphine, the last of whom was regarded in the first *Cénacle* as the very personification of the Romantic Muse. Lamartine would have nothing to do with the venture; he disliked anything in the nature of a coterie, and even went so far as to describe the *Muse* as “fort amusante . . . le délire au lieu du génie.” But he characteristically subscribed 1,000 francs to the expenses, and insisted on remaining anonymous.

The literary criticism was to be of the type inaugurated by Chateaubriand, a criticism of beauties rather than defects, and of the spirit rather than the letter. Its judgments were to be strictly impartial; fervently Royalist itself, it opened its columns to writers of every political creed. But, unfortunately, these courtesies were not reciprocated by the classical and liberal opposition, which

described the editors as chimerical in politics and in literature alike, and could only say in extenuation that they were "fort jeunes, et par conséquent susceptibles d'écouter de sages avis."

The reaction against *Le Trône* which set in with the accession of Charles X. and the triumph of the Ultras has also its reflection in Restoration literature. If Lamartine and Hugo eulogised the newly crowned monarch, Béranger openly derided him as "Charles le Simple." The King might have been given the sword of Charlemagne, but with it he was only to hew at those ends which he and a great part of France believed to be Divinely shaped. The discontent, once sown, spread rapidly, as the Liberals grew in strength, until the July insurrection terminated what might have been called a tragedy but for the diminished stature of the protagonists.

Prominent in opposition was the *Globe*, a left-centre organ, which, unlike the more Radical journals, the *Courrier Français* and the *Constitutionnel*, is remembered to-day in the history of literature. Its origin was due directly to the policy inspired by the Congregation, which, after having "purged" the Civil Service and "sent the army to church by order," now turned its attention to the University. It was a new stage of the old quarrel over ecclesiastical control; the extremists in the Church now had their revenge for the cavalier treatment accorded them by the University under Napoleon. The liberal and free-thinking professors were deprived of their chairs at once; even the moderates were retained only if they gave pledges of "right thinking"; hypocrisy reigned here also "comme un petit souffle bénin et infecte." It was these victims of ultramontane zeal, for the most part young, all brilliant, all inspired by the same principles, who founded

the *Globe*, and hence it is easy to account for the solidarity which constituted so much of its strength.

Its central doctrines were the doctrines of liberty and progress—commonplaces in 1848, wrote Sainte Beuve, but dangerous novelties in the reactionary days of 1824.

“Destructeur et pacifique tout ensemble, il combattait le catholicisme avec la liberté, et réclamait la liberté pour les Jésuites. S'affranchissant des liens d'une nationalité étroite, il admirait et glorifiait aux yeux de la France les grands poètes de l'Angleterre et de l'Allemagne.”

At first its only aim was to take part in the great movement of pacifism, which began about this time, by spreading information about the scientific, literary, historical and philosophic works which this movement was inspiring; but with growing intolerance on the part of its critics its own aims were narrowed down, and it became definitely the organ of Liberalism and social reform, working for the July Revolution, and adopting the doctrines of Saint-Simon when that Revolution was accomplished.

From the beginning, then, it was closely connected with the school of the *doctrinaires*, of those to whom liberty was a philosophic dogma rather than a political necessity. Dubois, the editor, had been Sainte-Beuve's professor of rhetoric; his pupil tells us that he used to “prodiguer sur tout sujet et en toute occasion des vues critiques à la Staël, un peu vagues peut-être . . . mais ingénieuses, singulièrement variées, d'une grande excitation et d'un heureux renouvellement.” Duvergier de Hauranne was chiefly occupied with English literature; Ernest Descloseaux, “the first among us who really knew Shakespeare,” was another authority on the same subject, and was succeeded by Charles Magnin, the writer

of the review on *Hernani* and a lover of Camoëns. Jouffroy and his friends wrote on the new philosophy, evolved by Cousin, who, however, contributed nothing to the paper, with the exception of some articles on Kant. German influence was further represented by Vitet, whose æsthetic criticism was based on that of Schlegel, and by Ampère, whose articles on Goethe were the occasion of an interchange of compliments between their subject and "ces messieurs du *Globe*," for whom he declared the greatest admiration. Villemain and Guizot contributed very little, but the *Globe* followed their University courses in detail, and claimed with justice to be inspired by their views. Thierry communicated some fragments of his *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre* and the first of the *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France*.

One has only to compare the *Globe* with the *Muse Française*, however, to realise how far it fell short of the Romantic ideal. The staff of the one had been made up of poets; the other was edited by University professors. With all its good qualities, the *Globe* was essentially prosaic. It grasped only one of the doctrines of Romanticism, that of liberty, and this simply because liberty in art was the natural concomitant of social and political freedom. It missed altogether the beauty and terror of the Middle Ages; Byronism and Ossianism left it cold; occupied as it was with schemes for agricultural reform, it could not see nature, shrouded in the iridescent mist of poetry. Even Sainte-Beuve, who began his connection with the *Globe* by writing "popular" articles on the topical subject of *La Grèce Pittoresque*, could not effect a permanent alliance between the true Romantics and the *doctrinaires*, for an alliance between such opposites was impossible. Hence it is that while in the early days of struggle and indecision the theories of the *Globe* are

admirable for their breadth and understanding, its later judgments of the masterpieces of the matured Romantics are irritating in their trivialities and reservations. Very significant is the anecdote of the writing of the *Globe's* critique of *Hernani*: how all the staff were assembled in the office after the "battle," discussing and applauding, while Magnin was trying to evolve his article, and the compositors kept sending urgent demands for it from below; how he hesitated and they argued and qualified, till at last some revolutionary spirit cried: "Allons, Magnin, lâchez l'admirable!" So *Hernani* received its laurels, but they were accorded with a grudging hand.

It is impossible to leave the *Globe*, however, without paying a tribute to the unswerving honesty which redeemed its occasional wrong-headedness. Of all the enemies of the monarchy, it was the most straightforward, the most courteous, the most moderate in tone; its aims were the highest; it was pure of all taint of self-interest or suspicion of log-rolling; and such a reputation for probity is not so common during the Restoration that one can afford to pass it by in silence.

Of the individual writers of the period, more than one was inspired by disgust with the excesses of the ultra-Royalists and the *régime* of Charles X. Béranger, by far the most popular of these, enshrined his antipathy to *Trône et Autel* in a collection of popular songs, the refrains of which, at least, could seldom have been forgotten by those who heard them. Béranger was tired of war and despotism:

"M'étourdirez-vous donc toujours,
Tambours, tambours, maudits tambours?"

He extolled, in what is perhaps his best-known *chanson*, the merry and mythical monarch, "se levant tard, se

couchant tôt," crowned with a "simple bonnet de coton," lazily making a progress through his kingdom on a donkey, thirsting, not for power, but for potatoes. All the prescriptions and executions of the Restoration were even more repulsive to him than was Napoleon's tyranny when in 1813 he wrote *Le Roi d'Yvetot*. So he wrote *Le Marquis de Carabas*, the story of an exiled noble who has returned with the Bourbons and spends his newly won prosperity in lording it over the people. No one can resist him; he will pay no taxes and submit to no restrictions. "Long live *Trône et Autel*" is his watchword, and "Guerre aux vilains et rossez-les!" Full of irony is *La Petite Fée* (1817), which tells of a kingdom ruled by a fairy who gave "félicité parfaite" to her people with a single stroke of her wand. The malice, as might be expected, is in the refrain:

"Ah! bonne fée, enseignez-nous
Où vous cachez votre baguette!"

Later Béranger wrote more purely patriotic songs in the Liberal interest—and suffered for them. In the *Vieux Sergent* (1823), for example, he expresses his fervent hatred of the returned *émigrés*; the old soldier, seeing the white flag pass, cries: "C'est un drapeau que je ne connais pas!" This idea is repeated in *Le Vieux Drapeau*. "Fier de mes exploits et des leurs," says the old warrior. "J'ai mon drapeau dans ma chaumière."

"Ce drapeau payait à la France
Tout le sang qu'il nous a coûté.
Sur le sein de la Liberté
Nos fils jouaient avec sa lance.
Qu'il prouve encore aux oppresseurs
Combien la gloire est roturière.
Quand secoueraï-je la poussière
Qui ternit ses nobles couleurs?"

With these daring stanzas and numerous other songs all equally bold may be compared *La Sainte Alliance des Peuples*, a sketch of Utopian happiness contrasting with the misery wrought by the ambition of kings. In his last stage of evolution Béranger becomes the eulogist of the exiled Emperor. The little myrmidons of the Restoration dance round the tomb of the great Achilles.¹ But his apologist, whether mourning his death with his faithful adherents the country over, or developing the legendary theme "Il n'est pas mort," rises to heights of eloquence which he had not elsewhere approached. He takes the tone of prophecy:

"On parlera de sa gloire
Sous le chaume bien longtemps.
L'humble toit, dans cinquante ans,
Ne connaîtra pas d'autre histoire."

Béranger had passed from Liberalism back to that fervid Imperialism which was his only real source of inspiration.

With Paul-Louis Courier, a brilliant satirist and a stylist of no little merit, opposition to Altar and to Throne are bound in one. For the first few months of the Restoration he was counted a Royalist, but it was not long ere the audacity of his pamphlets made ample amends for this passivity. A great lover of the soil, he believed that the parcelling out of land at the Revolution had both improved agriculture and raised the standard of morality. Hence when the Château de Chambord was to be presented to a Prince of the blood as a "pledge of the love of his faithful adherents," Paul-Louis broke out into con-

¹ "Il n'est pas nécessaire de dire que l'auteur confond à dessein les Mirmidons, soldats d'Achille, avec le peuple nain et fabuleux à qui on avait donné le même nom."—*Note in the "Edition définitive" of 1869.*

demnation, not merely of the proposal, but of the whole system which made it possible. His *Simple Discours de Paul-Louis, Vigneron de la Chavonnière*, was judged seditious and poisonous—and this, from the point of view of the authorities, it certainly was.

Courier protests with equal violence against the Church. The young Restoration priest, who, like Béranger's Marquis, has now come into his own again, "a voulu tout régenter." He invokes old laws on the observance of Sundays and festivals; he even wishes, forsooth, to prevent the villagers from dancing when and where they please! The pen of the "simple vinedresser" is at work again, and into the *Pétition pour des villageois qu'on empêche de danser* he packs all his pet ideas both on Church and State. If we stay away from Church, he says in effect, we do at least work for our living, which is more than any courtier can presume to boast. Nothing but admiration can be felt by any right-minded person for the peasant folk, and their "bonne tenue, décence, franche gaieté," transformed as they have been from serfs to freemen by the Revolution, "cette grande époque." Yet intolerant clerics, whose narrow minds are quite incapable of perceiving that the times have advanced, conspire to make the peasant a serf again! And what can be said of the Government which accords to so effete a caste its support and protection?

Benjamin Constant, best known by *Adolphe*, was, like Courier, a prolific Liberal publicist and a free-thinker in religion. Above everything else, he is a passionate advocate of freedom—of such a freedom as he was unable to find in the restored Monarchy—personal and religious liberty, inviolability of property, freedom of speech in its widest sense. The Empire he detested, though for some reason he supported Napoleon during the

Hundred Days. But the liberation of the Press in 1815 was not sufficient for him; there must be no obstruction whatever, and even in its early days the Monarchy suppressed treasonable writings, while under the Ultras the Censorship came into force again, and that for long periods. In religion his standpoint is, "La révélation est partout où il y a quelque chose de vrai, de noble, ou de bon;" his opposition to the union of Altar and Throne is about as strong as opposition could well be: "Toutes les fois que le sacerdoce a eu pour complice l'aristocratie ou la royauté, il a prononcé l'anathème contre les libertés et es droits du peuple."

The poet of the Liberals was Casimir Delavigne, a more serious artist than Béranger, a more moderate opponent of the Bourbons than Courier and Constant. The series of *Messéniennes* won for him fame as a poet, not altogether deservedly, while a handful of plays, which have already been mentioned, gave him an even greater reputation as a dramatist. In the first *Messénienne*, on Waterloo, he undoubtedly reaches his greatest height. Saluting the vanquished and fallen heroes who had so often covered themselves with glory, he bewails that Fate refused them "le bonheur de mourir dans un jour de victoire." Then he makes an ardent appeal to his country. France suffers and is in peril! Down, then, with internal enmity and party feeling; heal France's wounds!

Prudent and moderate in all things, even in his love of liberty, he was opposed to the Romantic leaders, who at the time of the *Messéniennes* were first raising their heads. Half-classical himself by temperament, he could not appreciate the spirit of Romanticism sufficiently to uphold it; and, for the rest, he disliked its "vents révolutionnaires," and Victor Hugo's "storms in inkpots."

A critic has aptly put into his mouth a quatrain of Béranger's:

"Redoutons l'anglomanie,
Elle a déjà gâté tout;
N'allons pas en Germanie,
Chercher des règles du goût."

Opposition to the Altar, bound up to a great extent with opposition to the Throne, is, nevertheless, not so prominent in Restoration literature. It centred for the most part in dislike of clerical fanaticism, such as we have already seen, combined with a disbelief in revealed religion or a devotion to Béranger's creation "*Le Dieu des Bonnes Gens*." The memoirs of the time reveal an almost universal hatred of the Congregation. This mysterious body, which had been at first merely a missionary society obliged by the English blockade to restrict its attentions to work at home, fell into the hands of the Jesuits, and after the second Restoration became the instrument of the politico-religious intrigues which centred round the *intransigente* Duchesse d'Angoulême. The Liberals wrote bitter attacks on "Mitis, the modern Tartufe," a supposed type of the member of the Congregation, yet its influence cannot be wholly accounted for by its dexterity in backstairs intrigue. There was sincerity of religious conviction as well as a desire for political domination at the bottom of all its intrigues.

But whatever its intentions it succeeded only in thoroughly exasperating the mass of the people. Its provincial missions, with their spectacular uprooting of the Trees of Liberty planted during the Revolution, their burnings of the works of Voltaire and Diderot, aroused resentment and apprehension in the minds of all who felt that, in spite of its excesses, the Revolution marked a great step in the progress of humanity. The aristocracy

had repented of its love for the *philosophes*, but to this day the *bourgeoisie* remains impregnated with the spirit of Voltaire; hence the magnitude of the blunder which associated both Church and Monarchy with the forces of reaction.

Opposition entrenched itself in the theatre. The provincial tours of Talma and Mlle. George, regarded by the malcontents as the antithesis to the missions of the Congregation, were triumphal processions. Talma himself gained posthumous glory by his refusal to accept the ministrations of a priest during his last illness; the popular imagination made him the heir of the *philosophes*. We have already noticed the anti-ecclesiastical bias of some of the tragedies of the day. Most significant of all is perhaps the *Louis IX. en Egypte* of Lemer cier (1821), a counterblast to the Ultramontane *Louis IX.* of Ancelot, which had so delighted the Congregation. One can imagine their dismay and the joy of their enemies when the sainted King, their own particular patron, was made to exclaim:

“ Fais que je rentre, ô Dieu, comme de Palestine
 Mon immortel aïeul reparut à Bouvine;
 Que, ferme appui des lois, mon sceptre souverain
 Soit plus soumis au Ciel qu’au pontife romain,
 Et n’enchaîne jamais, pour une cour avare,
 La mitre gallicane au joug de la tiare.”

The influence of the Catholic revival is most strongly marked by the work of the Ultramontane philosophers, Félicité de Lamennais and Joseph de Maistre. Lamennais, a Liberal Catholic, who disliked the alliance of Altar and Throne, planned in his youth a great apologetic work like the *Génie du Christianisme*, but abandoned it for the *Essai sur l’Indifférence*. In this work, begun in 1817, and finished six years later, he divides those who are in-

different to Catholicism into various classes, and then proceeds to examine the one belief which is common to most of them—namely, that religious faith is, after all, of but small importance. In the second volume he takes up again the old idea of an apology, establishes the central idea of the existence of God, and shows how it is upon this certain truth that Christianity is based.

In his essay *De La Religion considérée dans ses Rapports avec l'Ordre Politique et Civil*, he attacked the alliance between Altar and Throne, and in face of repeated censure from the Church, to say nothing of condemnation from the State, appealed to bishops and priests to renounce the protection and throw off the chains of the Government, and unite round the Holy See. This essay was the beginning of his departure from Ultramontanism and of his eventual rupture with the Church. A Liberal journal, *L'Avenir*, with the device of "Liberty and God" and a committee called the *Agence Générale pour la Défense de la Liberté Religieuse*, are examples of the bold steps which he took to reinforce his vehement beliefs.

Joseph de Maistre, whose work reveals more Ultramontanism than philosophy, takes Lamennais' original hypothesis and carries it to its remotest conclusion. All his other works pale before the ardent, almost fanatical treatise *Du Pape* (1819), the zeal of which must have startled even the Holy See. Without the Pope, he protests, Christianity is void of its meaning and power, and the Church becomes no more than a human system. Every monarch who has not been blessed by the Pope, every nation which has not submitted to his sway, must inevitably remain inferior to the rest. "O Sainte Eglise Romaine," he cries, in a long and eloquent peroration, "Salve, Magna Parens!" The final sublime picture, which does as much credit to his zeal as to his imagina-

tion, represents a long procession of the Church Triumphant, trampling down the false religions of past ages, Blessed Mary ascending the throne of Venus, Error fleeing before the one and indivisible Truth, and Christ reigning in the Pantheon, even as He reigns in heaven, surrounded by His faithful and His saints.

In literature the dogmatic religion of De Maistre is far less important than the sentimental and æsthetic religion of Chateaubriand. The comparative failure of *Les Martyrs* had been so obvious that it was acknowledged even in the author's immediate circle, yet the appearance of this admittedly Miltonic epic had at any rate the effect of directing the attention of the Romantics to Milton. The Bible becomes one of the great sources of poetic inspiration: for Hugo the Book of Genesis, Homer, Shakespeare, mark the three chief stages in the evolution of humanity. And the Bible means the Old Testament as presented in *Paradise Lost*. Thanks to Milton, French poets at last acquire "la tête épique," and the *Livre Biblique* of Vigny and much of the first volume of Hugo's *Légende des Siècles* are the most enduring monuments to his influence.

Such apparently Miltonic poems as *Eloa*, *Le Déluge*, and *La Chute d'un Ange*, must be considered apart, for in them we see not only the influence of Milton, but also that of Byron, the poet who, with Goethe according to Musset, with Scott according to Délecluse, determined the general trend of Romanticism. For Lamartine, Byron was "unquestionably the greatest poetic genius of modern times," a second Ossian, but the Ossian of a society which had become highly civilised and corrupt through its very civilisation. Thus he addresses him in verse:

"Toi dont le monde encore ignore le vrai nom,
Esprit mystérieux, mortel, ange ou démon,
Qui que tu sois, Byron, bon ou fatal génie,
J'aime de tes concerts la sauvage harmonie."

The *Dernier Chant de Childe Harold* is based on Byron, but the spirit of the hero undergoes a considerable change, and he finishes his career as a philosopher, almost as an optimist.

Byron's *Heaven and Earth* influenced Lamartine's *Chute d'un Ange* and Vigny's *Déluge*, both of which contain many close resemblances. In Vigny, too, we find not only textual similarities, but also a close spiritual affinity. Moïse has become "puissant et solitaire," and Vigny's favourite idea that any great achievement or great moral effort cuts a man off from his fellows is paralleled by Byron's lines:

"He who ascends to mountain tops shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow,
He who surpasses or subdues mankind
Must look down on the hate of those below."

The hopeless stoicism of *La Mort du Loup* is also Byronic, though too frequently the English poet broke out into railings of the sort that were imitated often by Musset, once by Lamartine, in *Cain*, and *ad nauseam* by the minor bards, but never by Vigny.

It will be noticed that the Byron of whose influence we have been speaking is the poet of *Manfred*, *Lara*, *Cain*, *Childe Harold*, the dark but sublime genius whose brothers in literature were René and Werther. And it was under this light alone that he appeared to the first generation of the Romantics.

"Vous aviez lu *Lara*, *Manfred* et le *Corsaire*
Et vous aviez écrit sans essayer vos pleurs,"

wrote Musset to Lamartine. Byron was the ideal of the Romantic hero, regarded by his adorers with bated breath, but also with a considerable lack of humour. As Chateaubriand remarked: "Lord Byron a laissé une déplorable école: je présume qu'il serait aussi désolé des Childe Harold auxquels il a donné naissance, que je le suis des René qui rêvassent autour de moi." Hence it is not difficult to understand the almost universal chorus of disapproval which greeted the translation of *Don Juan*. The slighter *Beppo* and *Vision of Judgment* had passed, as being the temporary aberrations of genius, but *Don Juan* was genius debased and depraved. Nothing could well have been more repugnant to the idealists of 1820 than the cynicism which pricked their bubbles and discoloured their rainbows; but to the generation of 1830, with Musset at their head, it did nothing but repeat the story of their own disillusionment. Mardoche and Rolla, the most striking embodiments in France of the bitter and mocking side of Byron's genius, replace the super-heroes, as impracticable in their virtues as sublime in their failings, of the earlier Romantics.

Yet, in spite of the instances in the Romantic writers which suggest direct imitation, in spite of the frequency with which the names of Ossian, Milton and Byron, Schiller and Goethe, Shakespeare and Scott, sound truculently through their articles and prefaces, it is important not to over-estimate foreign influence on what was essentially a native growth. French Romanticism was really French, "venu ni d'outre-Manche ni d'outre-Rhin." The last word on the subject of foreign influences has been said by Sainte-Beuve, and that last word is an emphatic negative. His testimony is so authoritative and so definite that it deserves quotation in full:

"Les imitations de littérature étrangère, et particulièrement de l'Allemagne, étaient moins voisines de leur pensée qu'on ne le supposerait à distance. Ces talents étaient éclos et inspirés d'eux-mêmes, et sortirent bien en droite ligne du mouvement français inauguré par Chateaubriand. Mme. de Staël, avec sa veine particulière de romantisme, n'était pour eux que très accessoire. . . . Aucun des grands poètes romantiques ne savait l'allemand. . . . Goethe était pour nous un demi-dieu honoré et deviné plutôt que bien connu. . . . Il y eut un effort direct d'importation de Shakespeare. Alfred de Vigny et Emile Deschamps s'y appliquèrent. Mais encore, dans leur pensée, cette importation de Shakespeare ne venait là que comme machine de guerre et pour battre en brèche la muraille classique. Une fois la brèche faite, c'était avec des œuvres originales que l'on comptait bien entrer."¹

Nowhere are we more struck by the truth of this view than in a consideration of some of the lesser lights who preceded the days of the greatest activity among the translators, and whose work yet contains all the characteristic notes of Romanticism. Especially must we notice in this connection the group of young meridional poets who represent the awakening of the South after two hundred and fifty years of complete silence. They are the Pre-Romanticists *par excellence*, purely literary in temperament, impregnated with mediævalism, royalism, and Catholicism, meeting first in their own Southern Academy, and later in a circle at Paris, possessing all the signs of a nascent literary movement without its exaggerations. They merge into Romanticism almost imperceptibly: in Rességuier's correspondence, for example, there are letters from Hugo, Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, Lamartine—all the principal stars of that galaxy in which these Southerners also shone.

¹ Preface to *Reymond: Shakespeare, Corneille, et Goethe*.

It is not hard with a little imagination to picture the spirit which animated the *Académie des Jeux Floraux* at Toulouse. Continuing the tradition of that mediæval society known as the "Très gaie Compagnie des Sept Troubadours," it was so rich in memories of the days to which all the Romantics looked back with longing, and its works were so full of that rich and flowered imagery which they all possessed that it was not surprising if the Romantically given by the year 1820 thought Toulouse the centre of French poetic genius, and counted it as great an honour to be "crowned" by the *Jeux Floraux* as by its more august rival, the Academy itself.

Jules de Rességuier, an Imperialist turned Royalist, but a Romantic from the cradle, was among the first of his group to come to Paris, where he quickly became prominent among the moderns, and already had a literary *salon* before the meetings at the Arsenal began in 1824. He seems to have possessed a singular charm of manner; no figure could be further removed from the fanatic with long hair and "gilet à la Robespierre" who trod the same ground but a few years later. Alexandre Soumet appears to have been a man of similar type, though more superficial than Rességuier, and a time-server of the most pronounced kind. His dramas are his best claim to remembrance, apart from one of his elegies, *La Pauvre Fille*, unless we include also the fact that to him was dedicated the first edition of *Odes et Ballades*. Louis Guiraud, a particularly fervent Catholic, who preferred his Southern home to the capital, is best known as the author of the *Petit Savoyard*, possibly inspired by a fragment of Millevoeye's which is hidden in a note to *L'Amour Maternel*. Emile Deschamps, the history of whose literary career runs for many years alongside that of

Romanticism, Peyronnet, Rémusat, and Montbel are also included in this group.

We now arrive at the moment at which this study of the origins of Romanticism must cease. The year 1824 finds the new school fully conscious of itself, with its headquarters in the *Cénacle* at the Arsenal, its official organ in the *Muse Française*, with a powerful ally in the *Globe*, able to point to the *Odes et Ballades* of Hugo, the *Premières Méditations* of Lamartine, the *Poésies* of Vigny, as the masterpieces in virtue of which it can claim a definite place in the history of literature. The hour of the great "battle" is approaching; hitherto the issues have been confused, but by now Romanticism has defined itself, and by that very act of definition has thrown down the gauntlet. The days of the vague, idealistic, unformed Romanticism of the "Mérionaux" and the *Conservateur Littéraire* are gone, never to return.

In tracing the origins of the movement, and its development into a school, we have not, indeed, followed the example of the *Mercure du XIXe. Siècle*, which in 1829 gave it a comprehensive pedigree, including "la religion chrétienne, les idées religieuses de la Réforme, l'influence de la Conquête, le sentiment de la personnalité introduit par les Barbares, les mœurs chevaleresques, l'influence des Maures." It has seemed permissible instead to "pass on to the Deluge" of the eighteenth century, and to remark during that self-contradictory period, side by side with the desiccating sway of pure reason and "divine common-sense," the growth of a new and even exaggerated sensibility, a fresh love of Nature, a tendency towards the ideal, the first reawakenings of a personal religion as opposed to mere deism or humanitarianism, the beginnings of the cosmopolitan spirit. We have seen how the

Revolution, like any Aristotelian tragedy, came to purify these emotions by pity and terror; how the Empire, by its very policy of repression, caused a further reaction towards idealism; how Revolution and Empire alike, by the field they opened for the free development of the individual, created that unlimited subjectivity and desire of self-expression which are perhaps the most characteristic of all Romantic traits.

It would hardly be going too far to say that the whole of the sentimental side of Romanticism already existed by 1825; it was the work of the new school, favoured by political circumstances which sheltered it from the cataclysms of the past, to give to all this vague emotion a durable and artistic form, even as Chateaubriand had translated into beauty what Mme. de Staël had seen only as theoretical truth. Nothing could show more clearly its aspirations and its consciousness of its own powers than an article contributed by Guiraud to the second volume of the *Muse Française*, an article which marks the union between "Mérionaux" and Romantics of the North, and which is in its simplicity more appropriate to its subject than some of the noisier protestations of later years:

"Or, ce monde nouveau, régénéré par un baptême de feu, est maintenant encore dans sa jeunesse; et comme l'énergie des premiers temps a fortement empreint de couleurs poétiques nos deux plus belles productions, la *Genèse* et l'*Iliade*, nous ne doutons point que notre littérature ne se ressente aussi poétiquement de cette vie variable qui anime notre société. Celle-ci est devenue plus vraie, la littérature le sera aussi: il est entré violemment du sérieux dans les esprits, elle sera sérieuse. Nos pensées ont été fortement refoulées en nous-mêmes; elle sera plus intime; elle nous révélera des secrètes parties du cœur que lui auront découvertes ses grandes secousses; elle

exprimera les sentiments, les passions qui l'aurent déchiré; elle nous donnera enfin de la poésie. . . . Les plus brillants essais en ce genre annoncent une gloire nouvelle à la France, qui a déjà passé par toutes les gloires; et si de malheureux préjugés scolastiques ou politiques ne venaient entraver l'impulsion donnée à notre jeune littérature, on aurait le droit de tout espérer du noble essor qu'elle a pris."

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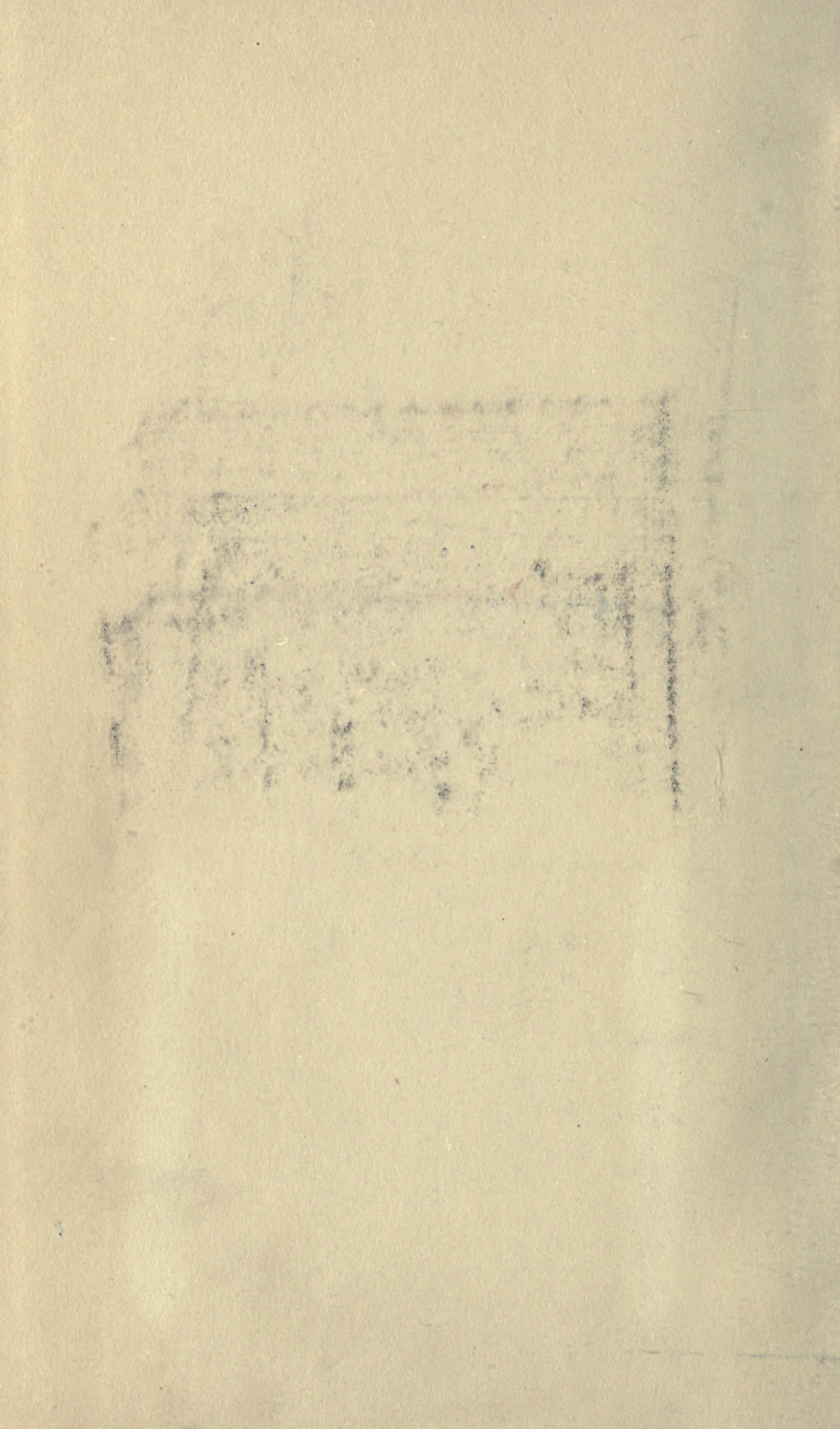
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